Homeless, *not helpless*

Report of the Homeless Persons Outreach Project

91-00192/

On December 23, 1989, the fire at the Rupert Hotel took the lives of 10 residents and destroyed affordable rooming house accommodation for over 50 people.

The cover shot portrays the Rupert Hotel March of January 10, 1990 enroute from the Memorial Service at All Saints Anglican Church to the site at 344 Queen Street East.

This event was organized by the Roomers Association and was the initiating point of the Rupert Hotel Coalition, a group of over 30 member organizations formed to advocate for securing, upgrading, and appropriately managing rooming houses as affordable housing in the City core.

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Table of Contents

Summary ____ 1

Introduction ____ 3

Approach ____ 4

Social Equity ____ 6

Quality of Life ____ 18

Managing Growth ____ 25

What People Said ____ 26

Conclusions ____ 48

Next Steps ____ 51

The Healthy City Office was established by Toronto City Council in 1989 to work with the community and civic departments to help activities and strategies that will ensure fair access to employment, housing, adequate income, opportunities, etc. As well, the Project supports activities and policies to conserve the physical and natural environments. If you have enquiries on specific projects, please write or call:

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"I'd like ... a place of my own – even a room and a kitchen."

Summary

The Homeless Persons Outreach Project was conceived as a way to begin a dialogue with a group of Toronto citizens who have traditionally been outside of any participatory public process although on the receiving end of public policy. As such, the primary objective of the Project Group has been to listen and report the ideas, attitudes and opinions of these citizens about their city to the Cityplan '91 Task Force and the Healthy City Work Group of the City of Toronto.

In the Fall of 1989, the Homeless Persons Outreach Group was formed to develop a means of consulting with homeless people. The group comprises eight individuals, all of whom have considerable experience in working with homeless people and the issue of homelessness. Several others provided assistance as resource persons. Staff of the Planning and Development Department co-ordinated the group.

Locations within the City that are frequented by homeless people were reviewed. Criteria included ensuring that both females and males would be involved; that persons of various ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds would be included; and that different locales within the City were covered. Nine locations were selected that were a mix of temporary hostels and drop-in centres. These included the All Saints Open Door Drop-in Centre, Anduhyuan Native Women's Residence, 416 Dundas Drop-in Centre, Metro Family Residence, Na-Me-Res Native Men's Residence, Robertson House, St.Christopher House-The Meeting Place, Seaton House, and StreetCity. Meetings with 15 persons who are homeless were set up at each locations and a discussion was held on the Cityplan '91 questions:

"What I like about Toronto is . . ."

"What I don't like about Toronto is . . ."

"If I were planning Toronto's future, I would . . ."

At the completion of the nine consultations, the Project Group reviewed the recorded information, which is presented in the final section of this report. Major areas of discussion were categorized into what appeared to correspond to the emerging themes of Social Equity, Quality of Life, and Managing Growth of Cityplan '91 and Healthy City. Preliminary conclusions were drawn from the information:

1. Homeless people share the same concerns as the population generally about the City of Toronto. However, because of the 'more public' and 'more marginal' nature of their lives, certain issues are likely to loom much larger for them than for members of the general population.
2. The chronic shortage of affordable housing impinges much more on the day to day lives of homeless people. It means they are likely to be homeless and continue to lead unstable lives for longer than if there were sufficient affordable housing.
3. For homeless people, the relatively high cost of food in the downtown areas where most live causes budgetary hardship. Food banks are not an acceptable alternative, since to acquire food there frequently means exposure to moral censure and/or rudeness. Subsidized, affordable restaurants where homeless people can eat in dignity are seen as preferable by some.
4. Community services are part of the daily experience of homeless people. They are fully aware of all of their shortcomings, because they are frequently dependent on them. A common short coming is that they operate on a timetable suitable to staff of such services rather than one that matches the needs of those they are mandated to serve. Hospitals are seen as particularly unresponsive to the health needs of homeless people, who frequently must endure long waiting periods in Hospital Emergency Units as their only access point to health care. More accessible health services and better support for people who have been deinstitutionalized are seen as essential.
5. With one main exception, public services are seen mostly in a favourable light. There are some suggestions for increasing availability and accessibility for homeless people, such as extending the hours for libraries and recreation centres. However, the justice system is not perceived to be just. Experience of nuisance offenses being dealt with by the courts impos-

ing unpayable fines and subsequent jail terms is common. Proposed alternatives include a more effective community service order program.

6. Homeless people are the true 'low-income' people in this City. Some of them are 'no-income'. They attempt to make ends meet in a variety of ways, most of which are unsatisfactory to them as human beings and are unsatisfactory to the rest of us in the City. Two suggested improvements are: a stronger public/non-profit role that matches and develops skills and abilities with employment opportunities and facilitates people out of welfare dependency; and a liveable minimum wage for Toronto.
7. Lack of proper identification and a permanent address means that homeless people are frequently subjected to a high degree of exploitation when they go to cash their cheques at the commercial cheque cashing services. They are likely to be twice exploited: by being paid wages at a rock-bottom level for onerous work and by being charged a certain percentage for cashing the pay cheque.
8. Homeless people experience a lack of power that is equivalent to their lack of income and their lack of housing. These factors are all interrelated. They feel particularly strongly about the blocks to opportunity that appear to be built into the system. It is seen as an unresponsive system at best and one that conspires to 'keep them down' at worst. "Procrastinating politicians and bureaucratic bullshit" describes the system for many. They are likely to be the last people considered, yet the most affected when city planning decisions are made.
9. Getting around the City is more difficult for those with little money and no home. Consequently, efficient, friendly, warm public transport is of considerable importance.
10. Since they live such a public life, the environment and parks and open space play an important role in the life of homeless people. A safe, clean environment, welcoming parks and open spaces are, therefore, vital.
11. Safety is particularly important to those who are most vulnerable. Because of their lack of secure housing and income, most homeless people are extremely vulnerable. It is ironic that the supposed safety and security of the non-homeless becomes a threat to the safety and security of the homeless through police harassment on the streets, in shopping malls, etc.

The Homeless Persons Outreach Project was conceived as a way to begin a dialogue with a group of Toronto citizens who have traditionally been outside of any participatory public process although on the receiving end of public policy. As such, the primary objective of the Project Group has been to listen and report the ideas, attitudes and opinions of these citizens about their city to the Cityplan '91 Task Force and the Healthy City Work Group of the City of Toronto.

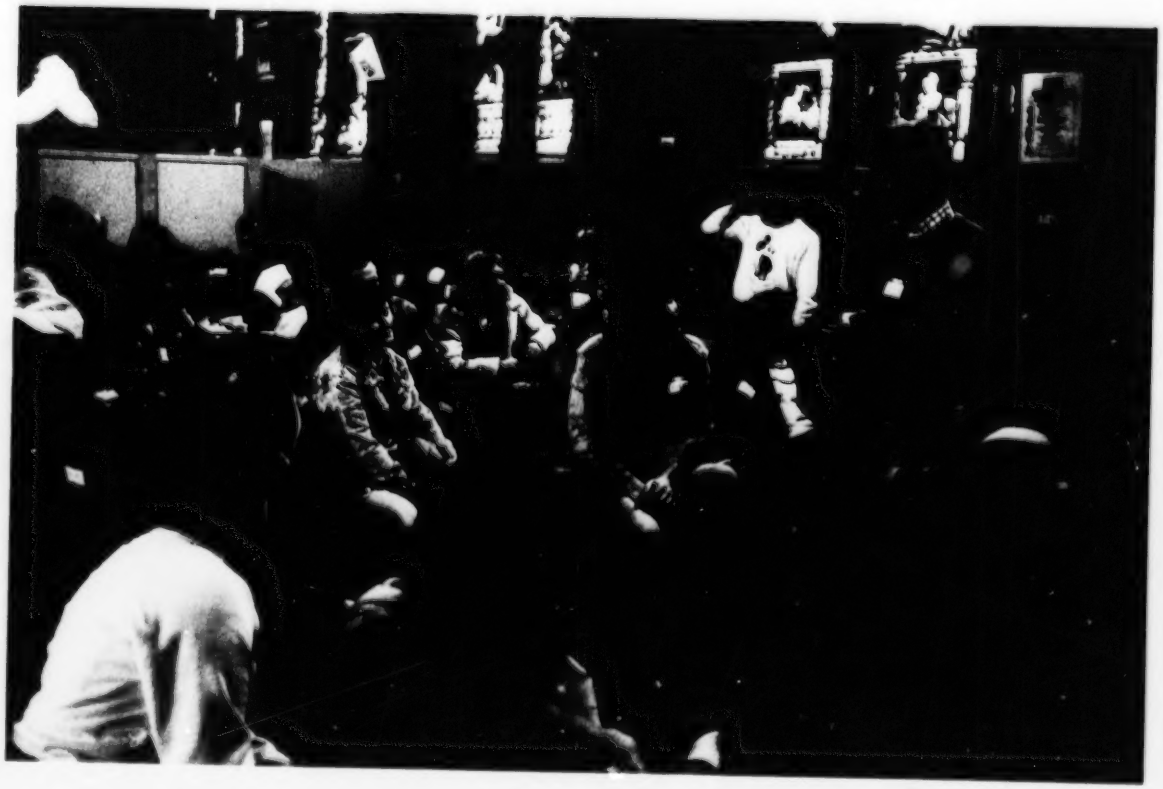
Our intent has not been to educate participants to the planning process nor to provide an understanding of government. It has instead been to open up lines of communication in the hope that a more informed public policy will also be one that incorporates the interests and concerns of Toronto's most disempowered community.

There are no reliable estimates on the number of people who are homeless or live in insecure accommodation in the City of Toronto. The scale of the problem can be judged against information collected by the Metro Community Services Department on the use of hostels and shelters. In their most recent statistical package, Metro Hostel Operations Division reported that from July 1,1987 to June 30, 1988, there were 25,316 individuals served by the "emergency" housing system, including 15,194 men, 6,291 women and 3,831 children. Statistics for 1988 to 1990 were not available at the time of writing this report.

Given that the majority of the hostels and shelters are located within the City of Toronto, and that there is a continuing decline in housing stock that is affordable to people who are in a marginal economic position, it is clear that the issue of homelessness must be addressed immediately. It is also clear that there will be no quick solutions. This document is the first of a series of reports on the undertaking of a community development approach to responding to homelessness in Toronto.

Introduction

Focus group session at the All Saints Open Door Centre



Approach

The Homeless Persons Outreach Group was formed in the Fall of 1989 to develop a means of consulting with homeless people. The group comprises eight individuals, all of whom have considerable experience in working with homeless people and the issue of homelessness. Several others provided assistance as resource persons. Staff of the Planning and Development Department co-ordinated the group.

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A staff person at each of the selected locations was contacted and plans were made to hold a "focus group" discussion on a particular date. The staff person was asked to recruit 15 people from their location to attend the focus group. Prospective participants were informed of the general purpose of the meeting, that refreshments would be available, and that an honorarium of $15 and two Transit tickets would be provided.

On the arranged date, two members of the Project Group attended to facilitate and record the

discussion. A basic overview of the purpose of the Official Plan and the Cityplan '91 review process was given to each group at the introduction of the session. Although the difficulty of maintaining contact with all participants was recognized, each group was informed that there will be follow-up discussions held once the first round of Cityplan consultations were completed. This was stated as likely occurring in the Spring of 1990. No information was presented concerning the potential for establishing community development objectives related to the Healthy City programme, as the Project Group considered this premature.

A discussion of approximately one hour took place during each session. The content was structured around the Cityplan '91 Public Consultation Questionnaire. This involved having participants consider three incomplete statements:

"What I like about Toronto is . . ."

"What I don't like about Toronto is . . ."

"If I were planning Toronto's future, I would . . ."

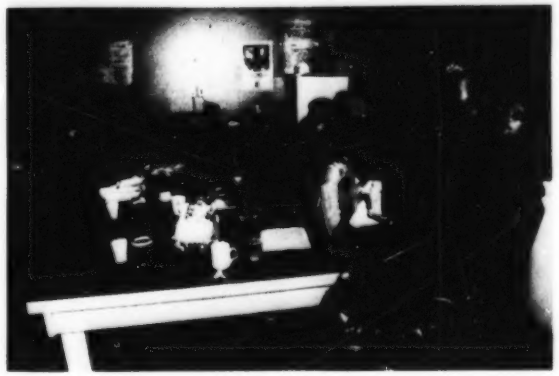
As the participants responded, their statements were recorded on a flip chart. The meeting format did not guarantee in-depth exploration of the issues being stated by participants. Once a key word or phrase was recorded reflecting the thoughts being expressed by a participant, the facilitator requested input from others. This was often responded to by presentation of a different topic, given the openness of the focal statements. Although a wide range of issues were identified through the process, several factors limit the analysis:

- Any single-recorded issue may have been concurred with by many members of the group, or may have been a minority opinion.
- The relative importance of any particular issue was not checked against that of other issues identified within the group, nor among groups. The number of times an issue is mentioned does not necessarily indicate its importance.
- Whereas silence by group members on particular comments tended to indicate agreement or neutrality, it may also have been that a participant felt threatened by the comment and at risk if they put forward their own opinion. This situation was encountered when comments expressed reverse discrimination, such as "People from other countries shouldn't get housing before me", "I don't like homosexuals", and "There are too many different languages." These opinions went unchallenged by participants during groups that likely had new immigrants, gay, or non-anglo members, or other members unsympathetic to such statements.

At the completion of the nine consultations, the Project Group reviewed the recorded information, which is presented in the final section of this report. Major areas of discussion were categorized into what appeared to correspond to the emerging themes of Social Equity, Quality of Life, and Managing Growth of Cityplan '91 and Healthy City. The focus group material was then used to develop this report.

It should be recognized that the information generated through this consultation process presents a perspective that is not easily matched with traditional land use planning. This should in no way limit its value.

StreetCity Focus Group



"Clean up burned out buildings right away so that new housing can be built and people who live there aren't left homeless."
- Rupert Hotel Site

Homeless, *not helpless*

Consulting with people who are homeless is a first step in establishing an equal voice in shaping the future of Toronto for those previously silent and silenced. Homeless persons face obstructions to adequate housing, income, food, community services and social participation in their day to day existence. People with few personal resources are vulnerable to being treated as replaceable members of an expendable underclass. Their experience presents a major challenge to the definition and reality of "Social Equity" in this city.

Housing

Lack of affordable housing is obviously a major problem for homeless people. Women, men, single mothers, families and native peoples all have much to say about their lives in public housing, rooming houses and hostels – most of it born out of bitter personal experience. They know how the system fails to meet their needs. They know what needs to change.

People need a place to live. "I'd like to be able to have a place of my own – a little apartment, even a room and a kitchen – I like my own space." Lack of affordable housing and high rents are forcing "... too many people to sleep on the street." Many complain, "When you find a place you can't afford it." "When you pay $800 per month rent and you're only making $1000 per month, you only have $200 left for food, transportation and everything else." Homeless people are calling for more affordable housing scattered throughout the city: "... places

Social Equity

where you would like to bring your friends or family. "Build low-rental housing, so everyone, rich and poor, can get work and a place to live in the city." One man suggests that, if money is a problem, we should ". . . start a lottery for building affordable housing."

Public Housing

Homeless people complain about public housing, and especially the time it takes to get in. One man, living in Seaton House said, "There's a two and a half year waiting list for Ontario Housing. I could be dead by then!" When they do get into public housing, people do not like the ". . . lack of respect for tenants and lack of commitment from staff." "The MTHA system sucks – while you wait to get in – [and it sucks] once you are in."

There are many complaints about the remote locations of the projects, the lack of services and the condition of the housing. One woman called it: "Crappy housing, offered in really poor shape by the MTHA." People do not like to live in large projects where, ". . . lots of low-income people are lumped together, like Regent Park." Low income housing should be integrated with other housing.

Mothers express concerns for their children. "MTHA is no place to raise children, there are syringes in the hallways, and tenants are threatened by people hanging out in the lobby." Another mother agrees, "Drugs are rampant in Metro housing – MTHA housing has nicknames like 'The Corridor' and there doesn't seem to be any response . . ."

Most people dream of what they would like to see: "Housing would be near good schools, safe, clean, easy to get to, close to shopping and transportation." They ask for more common space, more security, and, ". . . more recreation space and programs for kids and families."

Justice within the system is important. "Make sure the social housing system is fair and for people who really need it. Follow-up on people who don't need to be living in Ontario Housing any more, but still are." One woman suggests that, "When a woman was being battered, [the authorities] should say, 'he should move out,' and let the woman stay" instead of evicting both people.

Landlords

Homeless people are bitter about landlords, calling them "Slum Lords" and "Scum Lords." One man says, "You have to go to slummy, cockroach infested places." Another sights, "Manipulative landlords that charge high rents for places that they don't maintain." People feel that it is unfair to be asked to pay first and last months rent, or to pay a damage deposit, for places that are not maintained. One man claims that ". . . landlords don't want anything to do with welfare [recipients]." Another says, "People try hard to get housing, landlords aren't fair to them, [and] people end up back on the streets." "When you have been a long term, responsible tenant and find yourself short of rent money, there is no place to go."

People do not like landlords that ". . . throw you out with a pet." "Everyone has the right to have their pets, [yet] the poor often don't [have that right] – and can't get apartments with pets."

One man suggests that the City should have ". . . someone who assesses housing and doesn't let people live in dumps."

The standards of a place should fit the costs. An agency should take care of it." Others feel there should be stricter rent controls, proper eviction notices, and ". . . stiff penalties for landlords who evict in winter." While there is a general call for "no more Slum Lords," one woman says that she would like to ". . . get a place where I can get along with the landlord."

Rooming Houses

People, especially single men, complain that it is hard to get a room. "Living in rooming houses is substandard – no visitors, too many rules, and they cost too much money." They see a need for ". . . more rights for roomers," and more control over the quality of rental rooms. One man says, "I

A BASIC Poverty Action Event

wouldn't let a cockroach live in most of the places that I can afford."

One woman, living in the Anduhyaun Residence, sees a special need. She says, "I'd like to see a rooming house for recovering alcoholics, where you pay your own rent, [and where] the superintendent will know something about alcoholism. Permanent for as long as you want, where there is someone to talk to. You don't have to be there for meals."

Hostels

Many of the men and women consulted in this outreach have spent many nights in hostels, not just those now living in Robertson House and Seaton House. For many the experience of living in hostels is evident in the bitterness of their comments. "Hostels are disgusting." "Seaton House sucks." "Hostels are just warehouses." One man, objects to the living conditions in hostels and maintains that the "Toronto Humane Society is better than Dixon Hall." A woman objects to the ". . . violence, abuse and theft in City run hostels, especially Robertson House."

People do not like to be forced to leave their hostels during the day. "Have hostels open all day, in bad weather and on weekends." Some felt there should be ". . . more hostels, but not as big as Seaton House. They should be in a decentralized location, not all downtown." Everyone wants locker facilities in hostels and better food.

A man in Seaton House complains that "People from 1001 Queen Street West are sent to Seaton House in the summer and we have to put up with them." "Give people who are deinstitutionalized from the mental health system proper [and separate] supportive housing, or, keep them in hospitals. They should not end up in places like Seaton House."

Special housing needs

Many people in the low-income housing market do not have their needs met. Participants want more low-rental housing for single people, unmarried mothers, and for people with children. They suggest, "Separate places for younger people just starting out to live alone, but they should make sure there is enough privacy, like having separate bathrooms." "Spend money on housing, especially for street kids. We need community centres for kids programs; affordable day care centres with flexible hours for shift workers, and more spaces for kids of all ages."

Some want, "More housing for older people – subsidized and comfy, with swimming pools." Others suggest making, ". . . separate places for middle-aged people to live, like the seniors have."

Other special needs include: emergency pick-ups for handicapped people sleeping in bus shelters, and permanent housing for alcohol and drug addicted people; parks where people can camp, or sleep, without getting fined. "Police harass you when you just want a place to sleep in a warehouse or under a bridge."

Discrimination

Many experience discrimination in housing. One person says that ". . . if you're on welfare, they don't rent to you." Another states, "They should mix low-income rental units for families within high-rises. We're all human beings, even if we are poor. We're just as good as the ones with lots of money."

One man at Na-Me-Res, reports that there is ". . . too much discrimination. When they see a native person, they say, 'sorry, it's rented out,' or they jack up the price." Another man said there should be ". . . more homes for native people, we should have first priority, we were here first."

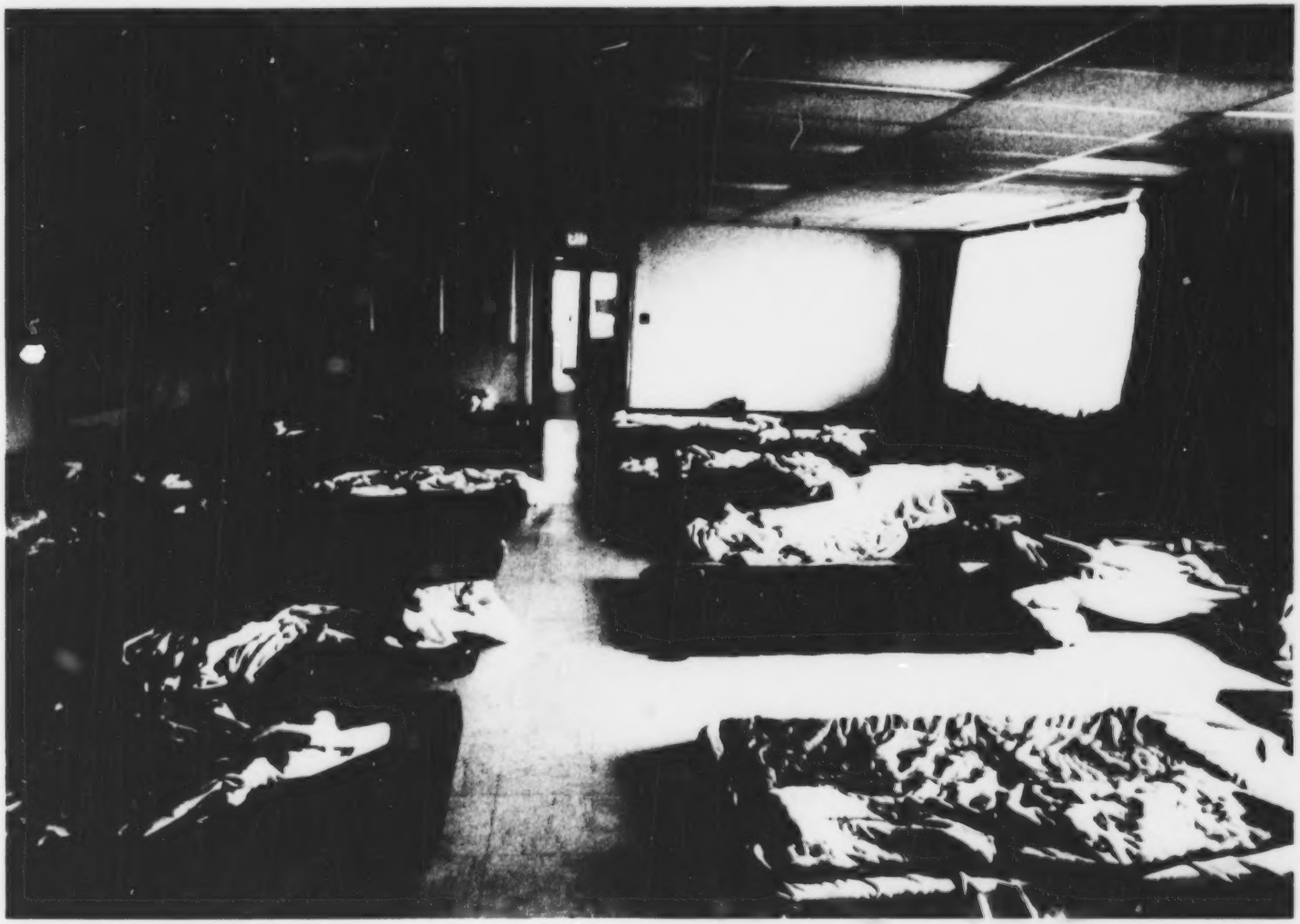
It is common for attitudes that discriminate against recent immigrants to surface. "I don't like people from other countries getting housing over Canadians who don't." Another suggests that ". . . people coming to Canada should be helped to find housing outside of Toronto – they don't know anything about living in the city."

Many feel that the City is allowing too many condominiums to be built. Homeless people do not like middle-class people moving into their traditional low-rental areas and "white painting" houses since this eliminates affordable housing and rooms. Some low-income people say that ". . . speculation on housing should be a crime."

Letting people fix up buildings for themselves

People questioned think it is a crime when they see empty, or boarded-up buildings that could be used for low-cost housing. This attitude is especially prevalent among the men at StreetCity who are helping to build their own homes. They say, "Let community groups fix up old buildings and let people move in. "They urge the City to ". . . make more StreetCity projects."

"Focus on people without homes."



Housing Priorities vs The Sky Dome and the Olympic Games

Not all the people consulted see the Sky Dome and the Olympics as a bad thing for the city. Some see these projects as creating many unskilled jobs. However, many want to send a clear message to City Hall.

One man says that, ". . . too much money was spent on the SkyDome and not enough on housing [when] the hostels are packed." Another man lamented about ". . . the way all the cheap rooming houses are getting torn down because of development. The Olympics will eliminate all the places that I can afford. Look at what happened in Montreal and Vancouver. Do you think that Toronto will be different?"

"Money is going into an Olympic bid that could go into helping homeless people. This will be even worse if Toronto doesn't get the Olympics."

Work and Income

Ten comments recorded in the focus groups relate work and income as attractive features of Toronto. Most mentioned the plenitude of both full and part-time jobs. Access to entry-level jobs for new employees and the availability of training programmes and night-school courses were positively perceived.

Remarks about income mentioned that welfare offers first and last month's rent, and helpful programmes.

Of the 40 recorded comments that associate work and income as negative experiences, many were political in nature. There is an awareness of the 'rip-offs' from the cheque cashing services like

"They say 'Sorry, it's rented out' or they jack up the price."

Money-mart; recognition that free trade was affecting the job market adversely and eliminating jobs for Canadians; a sense of discrimination in hiring street people; concern about the "sweat shop employers" who offer no security or benefits and poor wages. Men who wait on the street near the temporary agencies waiting for work stated that they feel harassed by the police. Those who work for temporary agencies also criticized the low wages they receive from employers who collect much more from clients, and the taxes they pay on their wages.

Negative comments specific to income included the analysis that the welfare system keeps people oppressed by not helping them off welfare, and that lack of identification is a barrier for many to receiving benefits and getting banking privileges. Several people mentioned rates being too low and not matching inflation, especially in Toronto's housing market. One remark blamed others for the problems of poverty - new immigrants on welfare.

In considering what to include in planning for Toronto's future, most of the 17 comments centred around increasing access to jobs and job training. Others wanted higher minimum wage standards for Toronto, and more government regulation of the temporary employment agencies. There was a suggestion that the government plan to disperse jobs throughout Ontario, so that environmental impact in this region is minimized and migration to Toronto in search of work would not be a necessity. Comments regarding income wanted higher benefits, easier access to services like dental-care and eye-glasses. Others wanted a total restructuring of welfare, so that there was more assistance available for people to get free of the system, and recommended TTC passes, work clothes and boots.

Food

Food was mentioned favourably by five participants, who appreciated the diversity and availability, and in one case, the free meals available in Toronto.

Eleven commented on what they did not like: the meals provided at hostels were criticized sharply; food banks and the questions asked there (particularly of young men); the high cost of food, and lack of affordable grocery stores in some downtown areas.

One person wanted to see better food in jails. Another recommended that food banks be closed, and those resources put into affordable restaurants with good food, and government supports.

Community Services

Community services, next to housing and equally with community empowerment, are of priority concern and interest to homeless people. They must provide a safety net of supports and benefits necessary for the emotional and physical survival of people who do not have a home.

Education, financial assistance for food, shelter and clothing, health care, daycare, information on rights and available services, employment training

"Close the food banks and have the government open restaurants that serve good food at good prices."

"Hospital Emergency doesn't give good treatment. It's slow and inadequate."

- Terry D. died in 1989 from pneumonia while sitting in a hospital corridor.

and access, affordable access to amenities and recreation, and opportunities to socially interact with other people are seen as vital needs by the homeless people who participated in the consultations. They yearn for a caring community. "Have more caring teachers in the school . . . they should be willing to help you learn, to take time to go over something if you need it." "Help the adults so that they can help the kids." "More assistance for newcomers to Toronto to help orient them."

In responding to the question "What do you like about Toronto?", homeless people had fewer comments to make than to the other two questions. They value the City's educational programmes, free services and the drop-ins. Only 3 existing services were specifically mentioned during the focus groups (H.E.L.P., Operation Springboard and 416 Dundas St. E.). The inclusion of food in comments concerning community services highlights the inadequacy of income maintenance levels in Toronto.

Negative comments about Toronto make up the largest number of responses in this consultative process. Homeless people talk about the lack of supports, programmes and caring attitudes experienced in their struggle towards positive personal change. "When you are trying hard to better yourself, those who are in the position to help often blame you and mislead you with wrong information (especially social assistance workers and landlords)." "There are not enough places to get information and counselling about your rights." Native participants, while sharing in the concerns of others, expressed the need for more services specific to their population.

Homeless people in Toronto talk about injustice and loss of dignity in their assessment of community services. "Missions serve you when they want to serve you not when you need it." "Hostels open too late . . . have curfews that are too early . . . make you leave too early in the morning." "Churches lock doors." "Libraries close too early." More than one participant remarked on the lack of

"We need child care at night for people who work shifts."

"There are people with a lot of skills caught in the hostel/welfare system and wasted."

public washrooms and showers, especially for the homeless.

In the negative comments about Toronto's community services there is an acute awareness of health problems and issues. "Hospital emergency that does not give good treatment; slow, inadequate, could die before you are admitted." "Need more treatment for people with addiction problems." "Not enough places for the mentally ill." "Medical services are not good if you don't have I.D." The frustrations of having community services play such a major role in the life of homeless persons can be summed up in the words of a participant: "Being put on hold on the suicide hotline."

Many of the ideas on what should be included in the planning process call for increasing the availability of community services: "more drop-ins," "more social workers", "more treatment centres," "more counselling", "more service agencies," "more shelters". In reviewing these responses it becomes clear that homeless people do not envision a future independent of community and social services.

When a participant sees a better future as "more public baths and delousing facilities", it points out the need to develop innovative and creative community service approaches to poverty and homelessness that will help to break the model of dependency. It appears that homeless people do not see themselves as likely getting more access to the larger society. Instead, they ask for more of the same community services they are currently criticizing.

The challenge for Cityplan '91 and Healthy City is the development of community services that, along with other initiatives, will work to eliminate homelessness and poverty so that people can envision a future beyond the immediacy of "Where will I sleep tonight?"

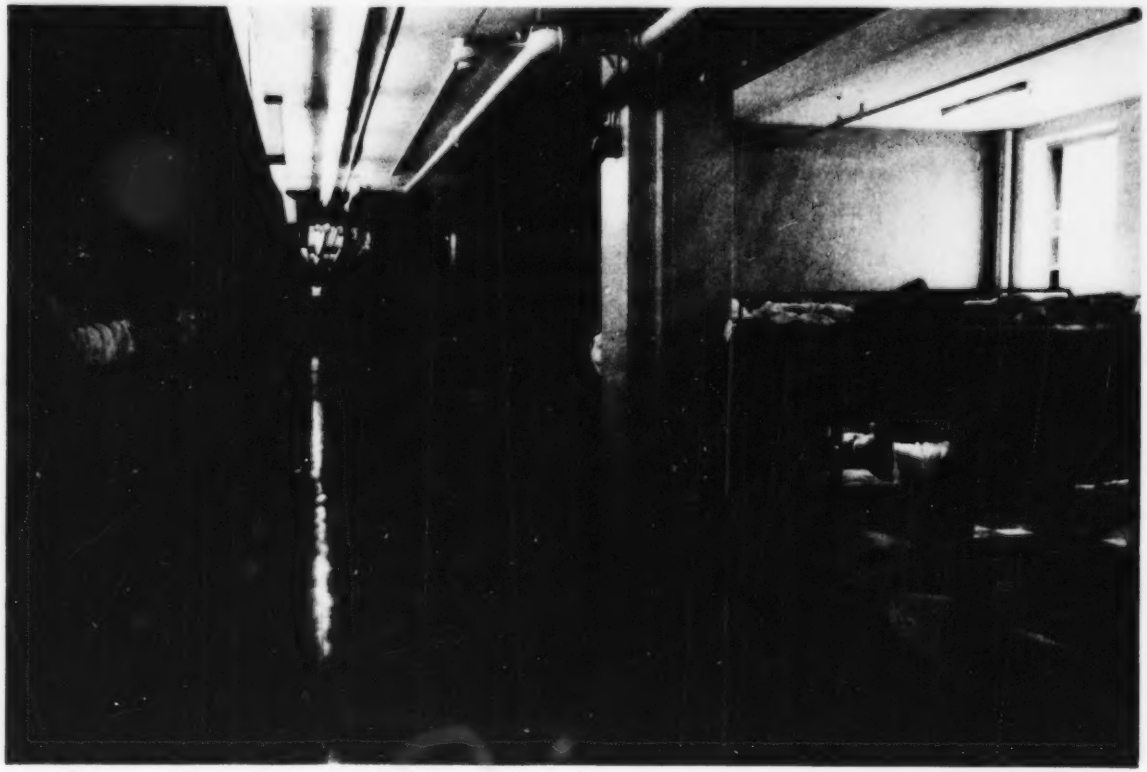
Safe City

Personal safety on the streets, using public transit and in hostels is a significant issue for homeless people. Violence, harassment and theft of belongings are experienced by many and are cause for concern by all.

Many participants mentioned that they are frequently subjected to harassment by others on the street, that they experience disrespect from the public generally and from store clerks in particular. Police scrutiny is experienced by many; brutality and harsh treatment from those in authority are expected behaviours. Development of Guardian Angel programs and mandatory reporting by Police Officers whenever their weapons are unholstered were proposed as ways to reduce police-related violence.

Hostels were mentioned by several as places where there is a lack of personal safety; where there is a lack of security for personal belongings; where there is a lack of privacy. Public housing came in for similar criticism, and the influx of drugs and drug dealing were seen by several participants as a major cause of discomfort for women and their children in public housing.

Both male and female participants reported that they feel vulnerable to sexual aggression and assault. Many female participants pointed out that they had left homes because of physical, emotional or sexual abuse by partners or landlords. It was



"I'd like a safer place to live."

expressed by many that there should be harsher sentences for people convicted of sexual assault and that there should be more services for victims. Several participants noted the need for a safe place to raise children. The observation of young adolescent prostitutes on the Yonge Street track was viewed as disturbing.

Despite the above, Toronto was seen as a progressive city in the area of women's safety.

Community Empowerment

The people involved in these consultations see Toronto as a divided community, in which some have more power than they deserve, while others are left out. They consistently referred to instances where they were discriminated against, denied opportunities, and shut out due to their economic status, appearance, race, lack of education or lack of an address. For this group, Toronto is a "rich man's city."

Political structures appear particularly inaccessible to this group. "Society makes it difficult for minorities, especially Native Canadians to advance to places of power, politicians, high level civil servants." Instead, this group is faced with "politicians that don't listen and act on our needs", procrastinating politicians" and "bureaucratic bullshit." The Dome stadium is a common symbol used to express such alienation: "money goes into building things like the Dome instead of going to help people." Their frustration is clear: "Can the City actually do anything on most issues?"

The Police, Courts and Jail systems represent another source of discrimination and oppression to the people involved in these consultations. There

"People are blind to homelessness."

were references to "police attitudes", "police harassment", "police brutality" and "the Blue Klux Klan". One person commented that police were "especially discriminatory against native people. One Officer publicly expressed racist views at (the) time he should have been providing assistance." Similarly, poor and homeless persons are at a disadvantage in the courts. "People . . . have to go to jail because they can't pay fines." "I don't like being looked at as a criminal because I don't have an address." "I don't like guys getting cleaned off the street and stuck in jail because of the Summit, or Expo (Vancouver)."

Big Business and the rich were regularly described as having opportunities and advantages far beyond what they deserve, while there is "not enough respect for people with no money". "Big business is determining how things run for everyone." The City of Toronto is seen to control land such that "affordable housing is left to the last to do . . . business gets the best sites." "Unequal taxes" mean that "the rich get the breaks. The higher (your) income, the less you pay." It is perceived that "the general attitude of people in Toronto" is "of the rich."

Landlords, the *medical profession*, *schools*, the *welfare system*, *authorities*, *employers*, and *yuppies* were also identified as having undue control over – or being unresponsive to the needs of – the people involved in these consultations.

Some suggestions were offered regarding the process of empowerment for this community. Often people would simply target the problems identified above as requiring action. One participant wants "landlords and employers to give me a chance instead of thinking that I'm lower class because of how I look or because I don't have a high school diploma." Others wanted "opportunities for women to speak out", "more kid centres run by street people" and "more handicapped access to everything".

Systems which are unresponsive should be changed. For example: "require the social workers to live on the street for three months before working with homeless people." One participant commented that "there should be a way for ordinary people to understand the facts about the economy and have some say in how the economy is run." Another said "Politicians should be there to help you."

The homeless people involved in these consultations expressed the desire to "create a community with my closest friends", and for a voice in decisions that affect them. These aspirations are not unlike those of any other members of our society, except that homeless people face more than their share of obstacles in struggling to attain them. It seems that consultations like this may be a small step in the right direction:

"[I'd like] more opportunities to speak out like this. We can speak for ourselves, we don't need people to speak for us."

"We need more opportunities to speak out like this. We don't need people to speak for us."

*"I like Toronto...
the variety of cultures...
the shopping (if you
have the money)...
the old buildings...*

How do homeless people view life in their City? A sense of place is defined by many aspects. These include not only issues of urban survival described in the previous section, but reflections of the people, buildings, and general ethos of Toronto. The ways in which Toronto serves and controls their lives are also parts of the whole. What emerges is a picture of the quality of life in Toronto, as perceived by people who are homeless.

Character of the City

Toronto is described by many participants as a "friendly" and "beautiful" city. The diversity of cultures, active street life, numerous 'people' places, interesting architecture and variety of entertainment opportunities are cited as attractive features.

However, the attractiveness of Toronto to the homeless person is diminished by their negative experiences with other Torontonians. Discrimination because of class and racial background, exploitation by employers and landlords who view them as replaceable, harassment by authorities, and fear for personal safety are conditions of everyday life.

Participants expressed strong feelings of being socially dislocated and frustrated: "There are people with a lot of skills caught in the hostel/welfare system and wasted." "There is no encouragement, support or care by people in this city for those who are homeless." "There are too many make-believe friends."

Similarly, Toronto's amenities have critical drawbacks. Limited access, affordability, and self-consciousness about social standing present

Quality of Life

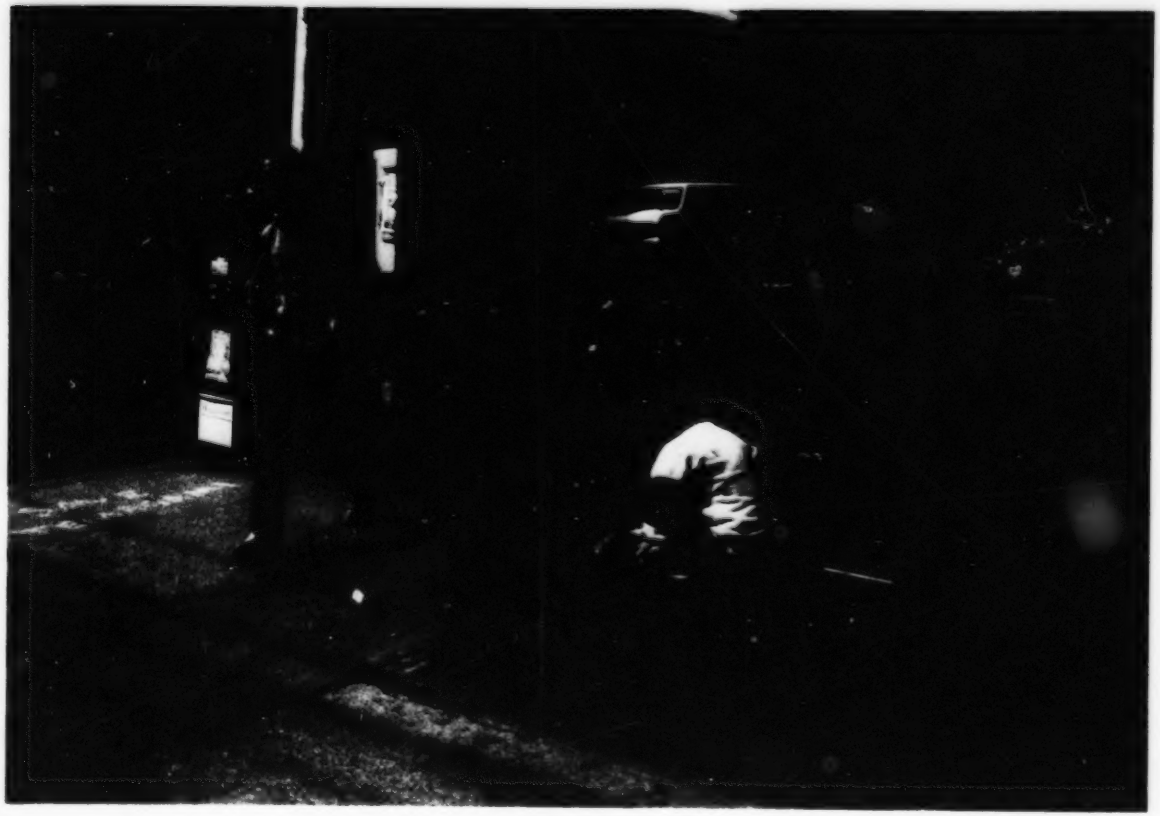
barriers to participation in city life: "Harbourfront is too yuppie-ish." "I don't like churches that lock their doors." "There are not enough public washrooms." "Not much to do at night if you are not a drinker . . ."

The surroundings of a homeless person are full of places that they do not like: "slummy, cockroach" accommodation, "run down hostels", "hospital emergency wards (that give) slow (and often) inadequate treatment", "food banks that ask too many questions", private "Middle Man" temporary employment offices and "sweat shops" where "contract work equals slave labour", and frequent experiences in "crowded jails" for nuisance offenses.

Yet, participants demonstrated a commitment to Toronto and proposed positive contributions to the character of the City. A more interesting Toronto can be created through "more murals and street art", "more places to show off native arts and culture", "a designated place for graffiti and political messages", ornamental "water fountains", and "downtown walking malls."

New places for entertainment were put forward, such as "a dance pavilion near the Boardwalk" and a "casino on the Island." Making public facilities "like the museum" and "the dome" affordable, making more of the city accessible to the physically disabled, and increasing the availability of basic public conveniences such as "public toilets and drinking fountains" will improve liveability.

Several ideas were offered on how to positively contribute to the human image of Toronto. Participants recommended that there should be "more assistance to newcomers to Toronto to help orient them", and "poster campaigns to encourage public courtesy everywhere, especially for those who deal with the public." Another calls for "more Toronto-based theatre and television productions and documentaries (portraying) real-life situations." The social fabric can be strengthened through actively



"Give equal opportunity to everyone."

placing "more value on family" and "expanding multiculturalism" in the city. In consideration of their personal situation, "an awareness program" about the issues of homeless people was suggested as a means of breaking down negative social attitudes that obstruct the public will to make significant change.

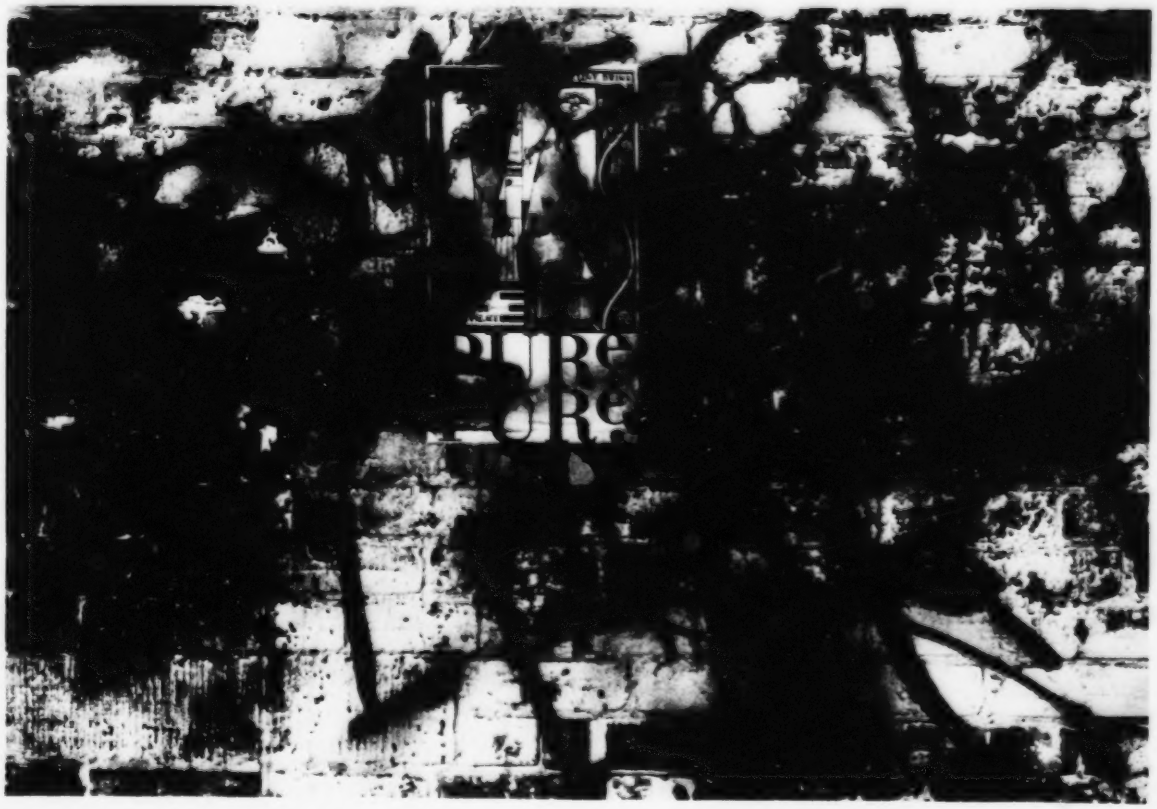
Environment

Given that homeless people spend a greater amount of their time in the 'great outdoors' than most citizens, it is no surprise that they are particularly aware of environmental problems.

The homeless people consulted were very concerned about air, land and water pollution in the City. They showed particular concern about pollution of Lake Ontario and the Don River.

There is some disagreement on whether or not Toronto is a relatively clean or dirty city. Those who believe the latter put part of the blame on irresponsible citizens who litter, those who neglect to 'scoop' after their pets, and people who dump garbage from their boats. Proposals for more recycling and garbage reduction, products that decompose faster, and a more energy-conscious public demonstrate an active awareness of the environment.

In terms of indoors environments, there is recognition of the importance of the 'smoking versus no smoking' debate. Since most homeless people are working class a high proportion of them are smokers and many of the drop-in centres catering to the homeless allow smoking in recognition of this. However, several of the homeless people consulted had adopted the middle class no-smoking stance so that, when the issue was raised it became the occasion for lively debate.
Another target of the indoor environment was cockroach infestation.



Respect your mother earth - "Have a place for graffiti and other political messages."

Parks and Open Space

Comments regarding parks and open space only accounted for a small percentage of the total. This is somewhat unexpected, as homeless people spend more of their time in parks and other public open spaces than most other Torontonians. The time of year that the consultations took place may account for the lack of discussion. The most frequent concerns expressed about parks and public open spaces were that there should be more of them. "A little bit of open space, a bit of land and trees every so often", were desired as oases within the wasteland of concrete and private property. Some participants expressed a strong appreciation for the larger public open spaces such as the "Leslie Street Spit", "Toronto Islands", "the Boardwalk" and "Harbourfront." Aesthetically pleasing features such as murals and fountains were proposed, as were concerts and more recreational opportunities for children and adolescents.

Transportation

Several participants expressed positive views about the TTC - its affordability, frequency and dependability. However, congestion in subways, streetcars and bus shelters was a particular concern of many. Frustration was expressed by those present with long waiting periods, particularly during cold weather, and with the difficulties faced by mothers with young children.

Most participants were satisfied with the taxi services available, although two people expressed annoyance that taxi drivers will sometimes refuse to go into low income communities.

Suggested improvements to public transit included increased security and safety on the TTC, the introduction of a 24 hour subway service, free TTC services on the weekends and for senior citizens at all times, improved design of surface and subway systems to improve access for wheelchairs

"Leave a bit of space, maybe every mile within the City, a bit of land, trees, park."

and strollers, public relations training for drivers and a separate transit service for students and workers.

Several people were concerned about private transportation. Relief of traffic congestion can be achieved through restricting private cars from the downtown core and/or the building of new freeways. A suggestion to reduce drunk driving was to have bars serve designated drivers non-alcoholic beverages free of charge or to provide free taxi service to intoxicated patrons.

Cyclists and pedestrians were also considered. More bike paths and the designation of bicycle-only lanes on major streets were put forward as valuable improvements to the transportation system. There were suggestions that outdoor pedestrian malls be developed, with Yonge street being mentioned as a potential location.

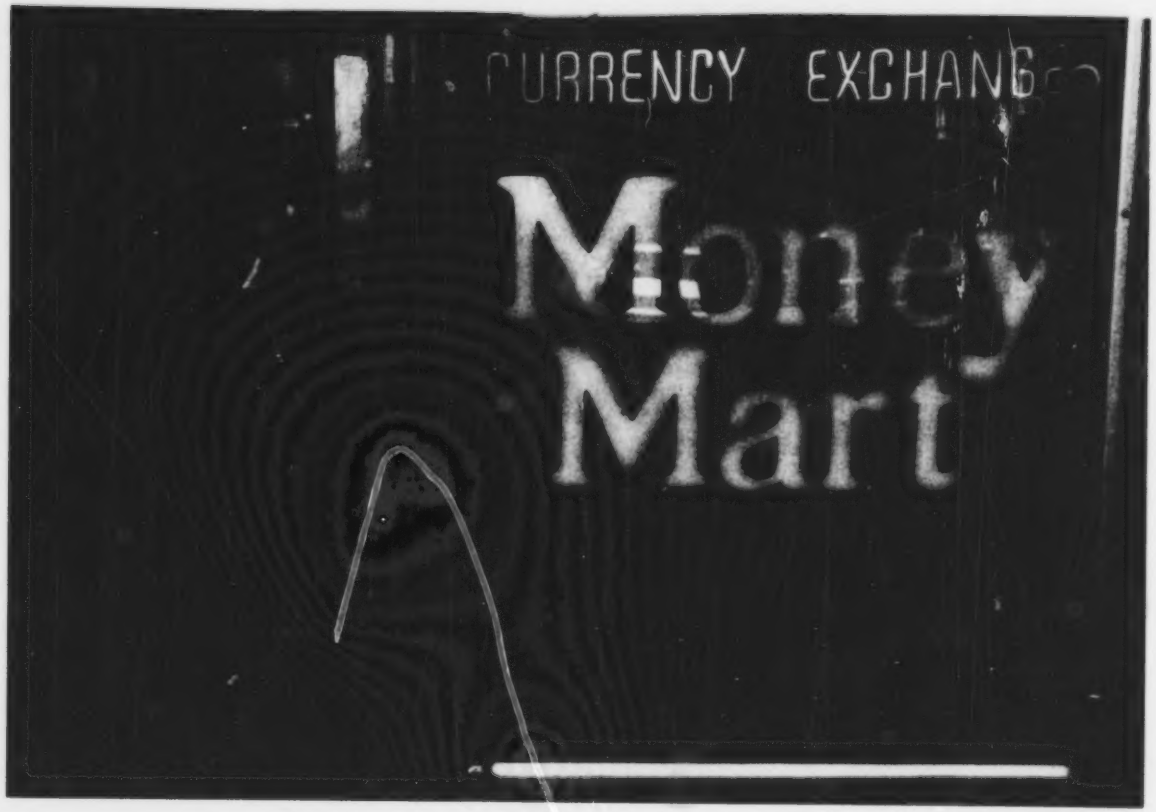
Private Sector Services

As homeless people lead a marginal economic existence, their consumerism is limited. Shopping was viewed in terms of whether the basics of clothing and food can be afforded: "not enough affordable retail stores downtown", "even second hand clothes cost a lot", "not enough affordable grocery stores downtown", "I don't like Kraft Dinner and beans (as a regular diet)."

Hours of operation of commercial services was an issue. More 24 hour laundromats, and Sunday shopping were suggested improvements. Longer hours for places of entertainment for non-drinkers was also proposed. Beer and alcohol consumption was a focus for several participants. Restrictions on where and when these items could be purchased and where they had to be consumed drew negative comments.

Financial services are extremely limited for homeless people. Without an address, it is nearly impossible to get identification. A drivers licence is difficult and costly to maintain, and few homeless

"The crowded streetcars and subways terrify me."



"I can't get a bank account because no I.D."

people can afford to own or operate a vehicle. Identification is easily lost or stolen when living on the street. Banks will not open an account or cash a paycheque or government cheque if proper identification is not presented. Given that homelessness equates to poverty, the very experience of doing banking is alienating. Cheque Cashing services, which cost a percentage of the value of the cheque, are used regularly and are widely disliked.

As can be expected, housing services are described negatively: "I don't like being ripped off by Homelocater services that charge 10%" and "manipulative landlords that charge high rents for places that they don't maintain." "I'd like a place where I can get along with the landlord." Since life on the street is not a supportive environment for personal relationships, it is not surprising that the references to intimacy were commercial in nature. Several participants proposed that prostitution be legalized and "junk advertising" that uses sex-appeal as a marketing ploy be banned.

Public Sector Services

General appreciation was shown for a wide range of public services by focus group participants. Community Centres, libraries, public works, recreation centres, the transit system, public education system, employment training programs, variety of social agencies, welfare and rental assistance programs were all recognized as assets of Toronto.

Homeless people are taxpayers, and share many of the concerns of the taxpaying public: "Too much tax gets taken off temporary salaries." "Too many rules for the Child Tax Credit – works against many people that need the money." "I don't like

paying the 9% sales tax." "Essential commodities should not be taxed." "Tax on beer and cigarettes is too high." "There's too much tax on everything . . ."

Similarly, familiar concerns about the functioning of the system were raised. Participants expressed dislike of "strikes by public servants" and tax revenues being wasted on "opinion polls (that deal with) silly issues." False alarms of emergency services such as ambulance and police "are noisy and a waste of money." The welfare system was viewed as designed to perpetuate dependence instead of facilitate independence.

Increasing availability and access to libraries and recreation centres through extended hours was proposed. Horse-mounted police officers were viewed positively whereas police in general were associated with brutality, harassment and prejudice. An expanded Community Service Order program and a "small time for small crime" approach by the courts were proposed improvements to the justice system. Focus group members called for additional health clinics and substance-abuse treatment centres to deal with their needs, and additional mental health support services for others they have encountered on the street.

"I don't like the way all the cheap housing is being torn down because of development."

Growth, in the planning lexicon, focuses largely on the physical development of the urban core and its related demands upon the infrastructure of the city, such as its transportation and public works systems. The desired outcome of growth is economic benefit defined in such terms as a varied and active work force, good residential opportunities, vibrant commercial activity, and appreciating value of financial assets. It is intended that through participating in these factors, the citizens of Toronto can have a reasonable standard of living and have access to means of upward mobility.

As is evidenced by the preceding sections, a large group within Toronto's population is dislocated, isolated and excluded by the process of growth that is taking place. Can "growth" be adequately redefined to include the interests of homeless people?

Development Priorities of the City

Although participants identified places and amenities of Toronto as features that they liked about the city, few if any positive comments were made about the development process. Many relate "runaway development" to large office buildings that they will never work in and expensive condominiums they will never own. Boarded up buildings and torn down rooming houses that once provided low cost housing, lost amenities such as the Terrace Roller Skating Rink, and being trapped in the hostel system are all seen as costs of living borne by homeless people.

Those involved in the "Big Business" interests of the development industry, not the average Torontonian, are viewed as the people to whom the benefits of life in the City are flowing. Politicians who are financed by developers and churches that are converted into condominiums after years of tax breaks were scorned by the participants. The planning system was also targeted: "The length of time between planning something and doing it . . . by the time it happens, it doesn't meet the needs." "Choices are made for political reasons, affordable housing is left to the last."

Several directions for managing future development emerged from the focus groups. "Less expansion of the Downtown Core" is advocated, with the priority on "Affordable Housing as the main thing". "Divert government and private money from big buck things like the Olympics and new subways to building housing that I can afford, helping the unemployed, raising the minimum wage."

"More citizen control" over the factors that affect Toronto's economy was called for, and a role for homeless people was requested. "We are all one city. Let's change the way people talk and feel about the division between the haves and the have-nots, and make all parts of the city good places to live, not just some of them."

Managing Growth

All Saints Open Door Focus Group

All Saints - Open Door Drop In Centre

Participants: 13 men and two women participated, most of them between 20 and 35 years old.

What I like about Toronto

- Night life
- Entertainment
- Concerts
- Lots of restaurants
- Ontario Place
- Islands
- Weather – seasons, no tornados
- Growing size of the City
- People
- The women
- Shopping
- The Eaton Centre
- Industrial area
- Temporary work is available.
- Welfare
- Free meals
- Lots of work
- TTC (when it works)
- Friendly environment
- SkyDome
- Community centres and recreation centres
- Big hotel complexes
- Pigeon Park (Gerrard and Parliament)
- Everything is close together and easy to get to.
- Lakeshore development

What people said

What I don't like about Toronto

- Garbage on the beach
- Not enough affordable housing, especially places where you would like to bring your friends or family.
- Manipulative landlords that charge high rents for places that they don't maintain.
- City blocks too big to walk around
- Price of clothing
- Not enough respect for people with no money, who are often treated like low-lifes, by hostels and police.
- Jails
- Traffic congestion
- Low wages, employers that take advantage of people who need to work and temporary services that pay people only a small hourly wage even though they are collecting high rates from the company. Vancouver outlawed this practice.
- The City doesn't exert enough control over the health environment.
- Quick pace of the City, people don't even have time to stop for traffic lights.
- Too much tax gets taken off temporary salaries.
- Overcrowded subways and buses
- Air pollution/water pollution
- Not enough parks
- No swimming in the lake
- Not enough recreation, especially on the week-end/the centres are closed.
- Change the hockey team/the Maple Leafs.
- Need more treatment for people with addiction problems.
- Too many hospitals in the downtown/and too long a wait at the hospitals for treatment/doctors aren't there when you need them.
- Hostels open up too late in the day (4 pm) then have curfews that are too early (11 pm) and then make you leave too early in the morning.
- Police harassment
- Don't like to line up for food at hostels.
- Hostel food is bad quality – poorly cooked so there is no nutritional value and food may be infested with roaches.
- Hostels are just warehouses.
- Missions serve you when they want to serve you, not when you need it.
- Double transit fares when you go to a job outside of Metro – like Mississauga.
- Not enough help for handicapped people, like access ramps. Many have to go all the way around the building or around the block to get into places.
- Not enough drop-ins
- Not enough places for the mentally ill
- Toronto sidewalks don't get cleared well enough in the winter
- Too many make believe friends
- Not enough open space
- Too much money is spent on silly opinion polls.
- Too much attention is paid to petty issues, like RCMP being allowed to wear turbans, or the Patty Starr affair.
- Too many people have to sleep on the street.

If I were planning Toronto's future

- More counselling for people coming into Toronto
- More rights for roomers
- More public toilets and drinking fountains
- More free things to do
- Disperse jobs throughout Ontario so development doesn't ruin the water and air.
- Government should subsidize the drop-ins so people don't have to pay for coffee and food.
- Provide better chances for people who only have a few years of job experience, when the want ads all ask for a whole lot more.
- Make "innocent until proven guilty" work right, instead of guilty until proven innocent, the way it works now.
- Harsher sentences for people who are convicted of sexual offenses.
- Better access to eyeglasses and health services for people on welfare.
- Welfare should let couples apply together, instead of splitting them up.
- Provide one central welfare office.
- Provide more employment counsellors.
- Make City buying policies work for national political issues – like the City should make sure it doesn't buy South African products.
- Close the foodbanks and have the government open restaurants that serve good food at good prices.
- Make all police cars the same colour.

- Free transit for seniors, because they are on fixed incomes, and inflation increases at a faster rate than their pensions.
- Provide separate transit for students and people going to work to relieve congestion.
- More freeways to reduce traffic congestion downtown
- Make subways wheelchair accessible.
- Provide a car-free section of Toronto.
- Make the streets winding, instead of straight.
- Make a separate place for middle-age people to live – like seniors.
- Make separate places for younger people just starting out to live, but make sure there is enough privacy, like separate bathrooms.
- Put a casino on the Island.
- Stop smoking, especially in the Church (All Saints).
- Learn to get along.
- Fly only Canadian and Ontario flags in the City.
- Have more Canadians on the welfare lists, not new immigrants.
- Clean up burned out buildings right away so new housing can be built and the people that lived there for a long time are not left homeless.
- Make more "StreetCity" projects.
- Allow pets in apartments.
- Make more open spaces and parks
- Look at the dislikes list seriously, because it is much longer than the list of things we like.
- Make City government responsible and have them do what they say they will do.
- Make university areas more noticeable so they don't interfere with looking for a place to live.
- Scatter low income housing throughout the City.
- We are all one City – change the way people feel and talk about the division between the haves and the have-nots – make all parts of the City good places to live, not just some of them, like Rosedale.
- Change the media so it won't blow things out of proportion.
- Add all night drop-ins since there is no place to go after 10 pm.
- Do closer monitoring of City politicians – limit the number of terms they can hold office, remove them if they violate conflict of interest rules and charge them in court and make sure they cannot run for elections again (example: Sinclair). Politicians should hire people to keep their budgets in line (side benefit will be to create jobs).
- Cityplan should focus on planning for people without homes, not on planning for projects like Harbourfront, since many owners there are in it. for investment and already have a place to live.
- Provide better access to university and higher education for adults.

Anduhyaun Residence

What I like about Toronto

- I like it as a city, it is my home now.
- I like it as a city – the structure of the City, the parks, the recreation centres, City Hall, the buildings, the look of the City . . . it's a pretty City.
- I like the vendors and the street people.
- Toronto is a pretty good city compared to other cities.
- Everything's out more in the open – that's good.
- Drop-ins, with counselling, facilities to clean clothes and self, food, TV, clothes, getting I.D.
- The architecture
- The Toronto Islands – escape from the City to open space
- Leave it as it is – no more buildings.
- The CNE – a once a year treat we look forward to
- Wonderland
- Royal Winter Fair
- Harbourfront
- Zoo
- Ontario Science Centre
- Planetarium
- Toronto's old buildings

What I don't like about Toronto

- Too many people
- It is terrifying to go on the buses and subway –the pushing and shoving.

- I used to like Toronto, but I don't any more.
- Pollution
- Not enough low rental housing for single people and people with children we need more of this, and less of SkyDomes and things like this, they're not necessary.
- You have to go to slummy, cockroach places.
- It's hard to get a room.
- Too much discrimination, when they see a native person, they say, "Sorry, it's rented out" or they jack up the price.
- If you're on welfare, they don't rent to you.
- Government is too strict, laying down too many laws like raising prices for TTC, banning cigarettes, things like that – they can afford to do that.
- I don't like all the molesting going on, – people are getting raped, children are getting abducted.
- Too many sickies and perverts out that should be locked up.
- Nobody in their right mind would rape an 80 year old woman.
- I think it's terrible when they go after them at that age, or the little ones who can't speak for themselves.
- I don't like the TTC drivers acting rough, like they know everything – most of them won't get up and help a woman with a stroller.
- Rules in hostels, i.e. leaving during the day
- Lack of respect of tenants: lack of commitment from OHC staff
- Overcrowding in stores, TTC, etc.
- Not enough services for native people, especially newly arrived in Toronto.
- Resources for native people (are) not welcoming/accessible.

If I were planning Toronto's future

- For them to leave a little bit of space, maybe every mile within the City – a bit of land, trees, parks
- I'd like to be able to have a place of my own – a little apartment, even a room and kitchen – I like my own space.
- They should provide recreational areas and parks in low rental housing.
- Get a place where I can get along with the landlord.
- They should mix low-rental units for families within high-rises, we're all human beings, even if we're poor; we're just as good as the ones with lots of money.
- More low rental or Ontario Housing – when a woman is being battered, they should move in and say he should move out and let the woman move back in.
- People coming into Canada should be helped to find housing outside of Toronto – they don't know anything about living in the City.
- I'd like to see the taxpayers' money spent more wisely – clean up the streets – give money to the native people to clean up all the papers that are blowing on the streets.
- I'd like to see a rooming house for recovering alcoholics – pay your own rent, the superintendent will know something about alcoholism. Permanent for as long as you want, somebody to talk to, you don't have to be there for meals.
- More housing for psychiatric patients, not hostels
- Easier egress
- More security in housing
- Getting tenants involved in cleaning up housing
- In housing – more recreation space and programs for kids and families
- More traditional family values
- More affordable access to amenities like museums, zoos, etc.
- More schools for native children to learn their language, culture
- More science
- More assistance for newcomers to Toronto to help orient them – booklets with information
- Counselling for new Torontonians
- Information booths/phones for more information about housing and transit
- Social assistance for homeless people
- More money for social assistance recipients
- More control over quality of rental rooms – inspectors

416 Dundas Drop In Centre

What I like about Toronto

- Drug education, especially for younger kids
- Toronto most progressive City re: women's safety
- Mounted Police, let's have more.
- Education re; sex and manners for youth
- Parks
- Zoo
- Lockers in hostels
- The trees
- Building and renovations
- The great diversity and variety of social services
- Variety of cultures
- 416 Dundas
- Cityplan '91 will stop us going the way of New York City.

What I don't like about Toronto

- Crackdowns on street vendors, especially artists
- Police harassment of street prostitution
- Problems for mothers getting back to the work force
- Problems for tenants with pets
- Expensive parking
- Torontonians not the priority
- "Domes" not homes
- White-painting eliminates housing
- Junk advertising, especially sex
- Noise and overcrowding (subways)
- Harbourfront is cut off from the City .
- Demolishing the Terrace
- Violence and abuse and theft in City-run hostel settings (e.g. Robertson House)

416 Focus Group

- Not enough appropriate affordable housing
- Too many large areas of low income housing (e.g. Regent Park) integrate them.
- Being put on hold on the suicide hotline.

If I were planning Toronto's future

- Should be higher wages.
- Should be lower rents.
- Prostitution should be supervised and safe.
- Should be more housing for older people.
- Lower the age for benefits below 65.
- Need more homes for unmarried mothers
- Safer environment, especially for women
- More murals, street art
- New buildings for seniors, subsidized and comfy (swimming pools)
- More access to jobs for women
- More supports for single women
- TTC drivers should get public relations training.
- Poster campaigns to encourage courtesy everywhere, especially those who deal with the public
- More drop-ins and better funding
- Common space in all public and private non-profit housing
- A 24 hour drop-in
- Effective community centres in all areas
- Promotion on what's available
- 24 hour subway system
- Locker facilities in all hostels
- Increase drug treatment centres/programs.
- Lessen the waiting time.
- More permanent housing for alcohol and drug addicted people
- More homes for native people, should have first priority, they were here first.
- Opportunities for women to speak out
- Self contained housing
- More places to show off native arts and culture
- More 416 Dundases
- When police pull guns it should be reported.
- More information on community services
- More public baths and delousing facilities
- More social programs and benefits like Sweden
- More support systems for victims of violence, etc.
- Do more about abuse and violence at Robertson House.
- Affordable appropriate housing (x3)
- Legalized (controlled) brothels (1 for, 1 against)
- Free and safe birth control
- More opportunities to speak out like this: we can speak for ourselves, we don't need people to speak for us.
- Basket of toiletries for all (being clean)
- Would like to get out of Toronto.
- Would buy as many houses as possible and turn them into drop-ins.
- More community/street party/get-togethers
- Eliminate need to have drop-ins (i.e. All have money and security and a place to be)
- I'd like to be able to walk down the street and see everyone smiling.
- I'd like to be divorced.
- We need a dance pavilion and boardwalk in the east end.
- Something like the Swedish system for unwed mothers
- That everyone share what they have.
- Everyone have the right to have their pets (the poor often don't – can't get apartments with pets).

Metro Family Residence

What I don't like about Toronto

- The way the government system is upside down, inside out and discriminates against ordinary people. It is an unfair system for giving people housing.
- When you are trying hard to better yourself, those who are in the position to help often blame you and mislead you with wrong information (especially social assistance workers and landlords.)
- *When you have been a long term, responsible* tenant and find yourself short of rent money, there is no place to go.
- Many people don't know their rights or are afraid to push for their rights or ask about them.
- Landlords don't want anything to do with welfare and refuse to sign the promissory note.
- The only way to get housing seems to be to "scam".
- The high cost of living makes it difficult to get ahead.
- It is an unsafe, unhealthy City for children, especially the Yonge Street strip.
- A lot of street kids hanging around Yonge/ Gerrard, including children as young as 11 and 12 years old.
- It used to be a nice City. Now it's terrible – more and more crack and cocaine around.
- People don't scoop their pet's poop.

Metro Family Residence

- There is discrimination against people because of how they look and how they dress.
- There is not enough information for people who live in Canada about the laws and regulations.
- There are not enough places to get information and counselling about your rights.
- The TTC is too crowded, and TTC riders don't

respect people with children. Some drivers are ignorant and don't help people with babies and children.

- That money goes into building things like the Dome instead of going to help people.
- Landlords and employers don't give you a chance if you don't have a high school diploma or if they don't like your appearance, or if you are too young or old.
- There is too much garbage around.

What I like about Toronto

- We can get money from welfare.
- They will pay 1st and last months rent
- Jobs. There is a lot of work here, particularly night work.
- It is a beautiful City – some parts anyway. It has big buildings, Yonge Street shopping (if you have money), parks with swings and slides for the kids, Zoo, CN Tower, Casa Loma, Dome, the Island.
- The TTC. You can go anywhere for one dollar.
- Some people on the TTC are considerate. They give me a seat when I have my child with me. However, many people don't.

If I were planning Toronto's future

- Clean up the worst parts of Toronto, and creat good housing for people who really need it.
- Provide more information about what is available, about the law and your rights. This includes housing.
- Provide more shelters for runaways and workers to help them.
- Build low-rental housing, so everyone – both rich and poor – can get work and a place to live in the City.
- Help the adults so that you can help the kids.
- Create a community with my closest friends. I'd like to be with people who'd give you the shirt off their backs.
- Make it a safe City, where I don't have to worry about being hit as I walk down the street.
- Make it a friendly City. If you ask people for directions, they will respond.
- Have more things for the children, such as parks and other outdoor and indoor places for them to play, and activity centres for teenagers (11 years old and up), where they can have dances and a safe place to hang out.
- Provide alternative places to schools where kids can just drop in and talk to someone about why they want to drop out of school (since they don't listen to their parents).
- Make streetcars and buses wider to make room for strollers and kids.
- Put money into things that are useful to people, rather than things like the Dome. I would use the budget more wisely.
- Spend money on housing, especially for street kids, community centres for kids programs, affordable day care centres with flexible hours for shift workers and more spaces for kids of all ages.
- Make Toronto an affordable City.
- Build affordable housing as the main thing. When you pay $800 per month rent and you're only making $1,000 per month, you only have $200 per month left for food, transportation and everything else.
- Make sure that everyone has enough money to survive on, to live comfortably with all of their kids, instead of having to depend on foodbanks.
- Make sure that everyone gets treated equally. No upper class, lower class snobbery. Treated as equal even if you are handicapped.
- Give equal opportunity to everyone.
- First, I'd like to have a house.
- Have more caring teachers in school. People who are not there just for the money. It's o.k. that they want to get paid more but they should be willing to help you learn, to take time to go over something slowly if you need it.
- Make sure that there is better quality television for children. Things that both entertain and educate. More shows for children during times they can sit up and watch it. That way, you can keep them busy when they come home from school.
- Take beer commercials off the air. These are discriminating against women, and they lead to smoking, drugs, violence and abuse.
- Have more animal shelters with programs and volunteers.
- Advertise more about the dangers of drinking – it leads to violence and abuse and is a health problem.
- Eliminate abuse and violence. They should

advertise about the truth of alcohol. It comes back to problems getting/keeping housing.

- Want landlords and employers to give me a chance instead of thinking that I'm lower class because of how I look or because I don't have a high school diploma.
- Put more garbage cans on the street so there will not be so much garbage around.
- Provide more public washrooms.
- Get grants to start up a daycare.
- Provide housing that I can afford. I would then be able to bring my family here – my mother and my grandmother – and make a better life for them. Would have a nice, safe area for my kids to grow up in.

Na-Me-Res

What I like about Toronto

- Transit system: good connections between buses, etc.
- Opportunities – training, jobs, night school
- Like the women. Sophisticated.
- Like the layout of Toronto – horizontal and vertical, easy to get around.
- Lots of taxis
- CN Tower, SkyDome, tourist attractions
- Compacting, recycling garbage
- Toronto is clean.
- Recycling
- Roberta Jameson (Ontario Ombudsman)
- Toronto newspapers – good reading
- Na-Me-Res
- Free education

What I don't like about Toronto

- Don't like pollution. It is like a coal mine.
- High rent in housing
- Crime rate
- Too crowded (expand the City out)
- Traffic
- Too many people working the same shift. Should be staggered shifts. Don't like strikes of public servants.
- Welfare system should match inflation. Not enough for housing. In Winnipeg they find you housing. (Here) they give you $150 and say "get out of my face".
- Not enough parks and bike trails
- Libraries close too early. In Edmonton they open earlier and stay open until 10 pm.
- Not enough affordable housing
- Discrimination:
  1. In job hunting. Ad was in paper 1 1/2 months and (I) was rejected.
  2. In housing
- Taxation - too much tax on everything in Ontario.
- Too early closing time at bars. Winnipeg and Alberta are better.
- Government is not funding the medical system properly – short of beds and doctors.
- Tourist attractions are too expensive, Dome etc.
- Movie prices are too high.
- Garbage keeps piling up, no place to put it.
- Not much to do if you are not a drinker, things close too early.
- Moneymart rip-offs
- Need to have I.D. for bank accounts
- Homelocaters rip offs – (charge 10%)
- Too many jurisdictions – can the City actually do anything on most issues?
- City Hall review and pass off on many issues – take too much time on minor issues i.e. smoking in taxis. Should spend more time on real important issues i.e. housing.
- There is no native daycare in Toronto (there should be)

- Difficulty in making transition from out of province/outside big City, to Toronto i.e. in school system "I feel like a foreigner in my own country."
- "Police" approach to drug problem: stiffer fines, more time, more arrests, too heavy.
- Empty buildings that could be used for housing people
- Police attitudes – especially discriminatory against native people. Officer publicly expressed racist views at (the) time he should have/was providing assistance.
- Young Offenders Act: should be 15 and under. At 16 you should be fully conscious of what you are doing. Young people are using the cover of the Young Offenders Act to try more vicious acts.
- Only having a few native lawyers.
- Society makes it difficult for minorities, especially native Canadians to advance to places of power, politicians, high level civil servants.
- Too many different languages, cultures. (There) should be a common language – English.
- Too much congestion
- Harbourfront is too yuppie-ish. (I) don't want antiques shops. They are over priced.

If I were planning Toronto's future

- Sunday shopping
- Expand multiculturalism. (In Nova Scotia, the stress is on bonding groups).
- Like to be able to buy beer at taverns.
- More recycling-returnable bottles
- More stores open later. Be able to have more night life. 24 hour operations (not just for drinkers)
- More detox services for people
- Would like detox services especially for native people.
- More native street counsellors
- More educational scholarships for native people; job training. Some provinces are better than others.
- Equality standards across the country, educationally from province to province
- Toronto should see Eastern Canada – expand its horizons.
- Toronto should study different ideas about drug problems – like the Netherlands.
- Decriminalize drugs.
- More consultations like this. At least once a year.
- More involvement
- More opportunities for homeless people. "No fixed address" syndrome should change. More support and follow up on the street.
- Police should be reprimanded for brutality .
- More people aware of their rights
- More native police. (more un-uniformed police)
- Better legal support for natives. Native legal aid.
- Would like native judges.
- More opportunities for natives in professions (not just cleaning)
- More employment opportunities when out of school
- More native hiring in cities
- More native politicians and civil servants
- More opportunity when natives come to the City
- More safety on the TTC
- Manage growth. Less expansion
- Native newspaper needed.
- Would like more government regulation of temporary employment services, i.e. Olsen, Quantum
- More consultation programs like this one.
- Having more of a say in what is happening. Don't shut politics up in City Hall. More issue polling, consultations.
- Only cabs, buses, delivery trucks allowed in downtown.
- More projects like Na-Me-Res
- People who are using lakes for boating – to be more conscious of their environment. Too many (people) throw things in the water.
- Would like more Toronto-based theatre and real life documentaries on TV, i.e. CBLT.
- Products that will decompose fast.

Robertson House

Fifteen women participated, most between 20 and 30 years old. Most of the women had lived in assisted housing and hostels before.

What I like about Toronto

- Clean City
- Freedom
- Nice buildings
- Lots of parks
- TTC not bad sometimes
- Friendly people
- Access to information
- Education – lots of it for children and adults
- Lots of bars
- Cultural activities
- Lots of restaurants
- Free country
- Government support

What I don't like about Toronto

- Laws – the whole legal system needs changing
- Too many bad drugs
- Welfare and FBA too low
- Too expensive – cost of living, housing, car insurance
- Too many cockroaches
- School system is not caring about newcomers – and other government services.
- Educational standards, curriculum not as high as the rest of the country.
- Teachers are uncaring.
- People have too many rights, i.e. innocent people accused of child abuse can't get their names off the list. Rape victims.

Robertson House Focus Group

- Too many rights for released prisoners
- TTC is too expensive.
- Abusers of wives and children need stiffer sentences.
- Welfare only provides emergency dental coverage for mothers, no routine or preventive care.
- Winter weather
- Government picks and chooses what programs and services are taken away.
- Free trade, I don't see us getting anything out of it.
- Lack of security on the TTC
- TTC – no space or way to get on with baby carriages.
- Drugs rampant in Metro Housing – MTHA Housing has nicknames like "The Corridor" and there doesn't seem to be any response.
- Some politicians evade people's problems
- Big business is determining how things run for every one. There should be a way for ordinary people to understand the facts about the economy and have some say in how the economy is run.
- Too much tax
- Too many rules (i.e. for Child Tax Credit – the rules work against many people who need the money. They don't fit everyone's situation, and people end up with a gap.
- Too much money spent on SkyDome, not enough on housing while hostels are packed.
- How Toronto controls land, i.e. Lakeshore, the choices government makes for political reasons. (Affordable housing is left to the last to do. Business gets the best sites.)
- No housing, people in hostels for too long.
- Crappy housing, offered in really poor shape by MTHA.
- MTHA is no place to raise children, syringes in the hall way, tenants are threatened by people hanging out in the lobby.
- Housing, MTHA so far away from services and transportation
- No way to go shopping, far away from where we've come from.
- MTHA offers poor stove and fridge, and no help to remove or replace .
- Hostel food – no variety, and no change for people from other countries who may not be used to eating North American food.
- Don't like people from other countries getting housing before Canadians.
- Poor information about how to get and use government housing services.

If I were planning Toronto's future

- Wine and beer in corner stores (one for and one against)
- Drugs – more active involvement of citizens and police to get rid of drugs.
- Raise the drinking age.
- Town hall meetings or organizations to involve people in decisions.
- People want to be involved but there's no where to go.
- Politicians should be there to help you.
- Better daycare for single working mothers : longer hours/cheaper and childcare at nights for mothers who work shifts
- Day care should be closer to home and available in workplace – business should share in the responsibility.
- Less big business and more citizen control of the economy
- People would be treated with dignity "just because we are poor doesn't mean we are helpless".
- More security and cleaner MTHA
- Housing would be near good schools, safe, clean, easy to get to, close to shopping and transportation.
- More options for subsidized housing besides Ontario Housing
- Better ways of sharing housing in regions outside of Metro. Choices for people who want to live there.
- Parenting courses for all new parents, support for all new mothers

St. Christopher House - The Meeting Place

Participants: 14 men and one woman, all former street people. About half were homeless and staying in hostels; 1/4 lived in rooming and boarding houses, and 1/4 in other rental situations. Ages ranged from about 18 to 45. Three participants had income from casual labour; 12 were on welfare, FBA or nothing. Participants included Native Canadians, Caucasians and a Black.

General observations: People had more negative than positive things to say about Toronto. The main concerns are income, housing and food. Many comments expressed people's anger. There was a strong anti-government/anti-system view. Participants were experts at survival. They expressed willingness to participate in the Cityplan '91 consultation process, and were willing to stay involved.

What I like about Toronto

- Free condoms, needles
- Free learning centres
- Transportation system
- The poop and scoop law
- Relative amount of park land in the City
- "It is supposed to be a world class City – but for who? We don't see it.
- Libraries
- Drop-in centres
- Coffee shops
- Diversity of food available

The Meeting Place Focus Group

What I don't like about Toronto

- Abandoned buildings that aren't used – could be used for low cost housing.
- Police brutality - racism etc.
- Landlords who ask first and last months rent
- City too ghetto like and racist, i.e. "China Town" "Italian Town"
- Waste of money on the SkyDome and Opera House
- Runaway development – offices and condos, Olympics
- New immigrants getting housing over Canadians who don't
- New immigrants living off welfare
- Metro Housing takes too long to get into.
- Bureaucratic bullshit
- Run down hostels, not sufficient housing
- Politicians that don't listen and act on our needs
- Lack of affordable food and place to get it
- Don't like eating substandard food (shit) at missions – want real food served at missions.
- People who drive cars and increase pollution
- People who contribute to pollution
- Medical profession who don't believe your concerns
- Expensive transportation
- Low amounts for welfare and ridiculous low amount for housing
- Deinstitutionalization of people who are not ready
- Landlord tenant issues i.e. conversion hotels and powerlessness in boarding homes
- Support for other countries financially not in our country
- Lack of rent controls
- Free trade and how it is putting people out of work
- Lack of vocational training from age 24 to 64 you get no help, especially white males
- Lack of public washrooms – especially for homeless people
- Lack of information on social services
- Lack of information on rights discrimination on grounds of race . . . in regard to housing
- Landlords "slum lords"
- Speculation on housing. [It] should be a crime
- Rate of tax increase. Commodities shouldn't be taxed
- Price of food, so expensive
- Poor and middle class over taxed, [while the] rich not
- People who try hard, get housing. Landlords aren't fair to them, people end up back on the streets.
- People who get blamed for their problems from landlords, welfare
- Police who harass you when you just want a place to sleep – warehouse, bridge
- Authorities
- Living in rooming houses – it is substandard, no visitors, too many rules, costs too much money.
- Welfare workers, social workers who push paper and don't care
- Humiliation of welfare [system]
- Not enough day care for single parents
- You can't get rid of Children's Aid workers.
- Food banks. [They] ask too many questions.
- Single males have a rougher time getting food from food banks
- Meatless food [at missions, etc.]
- "Kraft dinner and beans" [as a regular diet]
- Clothes that are second hand that cost a lot of money
- Goodwill and Salvation Army get donations: costs people on welfare lots of money
- Politicians who are financed by developers
- Police taking drug money – where does it go?
- Streets [that] aren't safe

If I were planning Toronto's future

- An increase inWelfare and FBA to keep up with the standard of living
- More affordable housing
- More natives in the police force
- More permanent homes, less hostels
- Increase in FBA, Welfare, UIC
- More health clinics
- More drop-ins with more money. Let community groups fix up old buildings and let people move in.
- New Mayor
- New Prime Minister
- Politicians not in developers pockets
- [To see] small crime [given] small time

- Half of SkyDome proceeds to homeless people
- Drug money confiscated. [It] should go to drug rehabilitation and homeless people.
- More entertainment for the middle class and lower class
- More benefits to help lower class and middle class
- Have someone who assesses housing and doesn't let people live in dumps – standards of a place to fit the costs. An agency would take care of it.
- Stiff penalties for landlords who evict in winter
- Proper eviction notices
- No more slum lords
- More lay people sitting on committees to see where government funds go: municipal, federal, provincial
- More clothing allowance and transportation allowance for homeless people and students
- More subsidized daycare for single moms
- Increase in the minimum wage
- More job opportunities
- More access to job training
- More adult schools. . . (More $)
- Simplified legal system
- Drug and alcohol centres with more post care and support, and accessibility. "Not just for the upper class".
- More handicapped access to everything
- Free trade – out
- Better legal aid lawyers
- Discounts and free tickets to events in the City
- More help for street kids
- A clean waterway
- More money in drop-ins and health care
- More park land
- People more energy conscious – consumers also
- 24 hour laundromats
- More abortion clinics
- Safer in subway – fewer muggings, less suicide
- More TTC security
- Sidewalks cleaner, done by the City
- Guardian angels, like British Columbia
- More street lights
- Better food in jail
- Less lock up time [in jail]
- People who cannot pay fines should not be in jail, more CSO [Community Service Order] work.
- Better social service system
- More private and corporate funding for social service agencies
- A stop to run-a-way inflation
- More care for Toronto's people [we are] "all Canadians"
- Like to have a copy of this report

Seaton House

Participants: 15 residents of Seaton House Emergency Shelter for Men, ages ranged 18 - 55 with average age +/- 30, several men of native and Central American background

What I don't like about Toronto

- Welfare structure sucks. Toronto is the most expensive City in Canada, but welfare will not provide things like free bus passes to help look for a job. Bus pass is cheaper than welfare in the long run if it helps get work.
- Cost of living is too high, particularly for places to live. I wouldn't let a cockroach live in most of the places that I can afford.
- Welfare system forces you to take the first job available. This usually isn't a job that I want, because I want a job that is interesting and matches what I am able to do.
- I don't like sweat shops and being forced to work for the minimum wage. Middle-man (private temp employment services) and the sweat shop owners take money that should go into my wages. Keeps people in welfare cycle.
- I don't like the transit system. They need bigger cars and more cars. It's too crowded, and you have to wait too long in the cold.
- Police harassment, particularly at Queen/ Sherbourne. People standing at the cash corner looking to be picked up for work (rather than going through a temp service) are getting hassled. I bet there are more break-and-enters because guys are getting hassled and can't use the corner.
- Welfare is slow in helping with work boots, clothes, bus fare, etc. after you find a job.
- I don't like being locked into welfare. I've had to

Seaton House Focus Group

live here for two years. It's difficult to get back into the mainstream.

- Why spend so much for the Olympics? Big bucks for 3 weeks of tourism. The housing that gets built for it gets turned into condos.
- There is a 2 1/2 year waiting list for Ontario Housing. I could be dead by then!
- I don't like the monopoly game of welfare. Do not pass go. Do not collect $200.00. Go directly to jail.
- The crowded jails, and being shipped out of the Toronto area because of this.
- Government is not doing enough to help. Why send money to other countries for their disasters when there is nothing being done here?
- The length of time government takes between planning something and doing it. It takes 20 years, and by the time it happens, it doesn't meet the needs.
- I don't like guys getting cleaned off the street and stuck in jail because of the Summit, or Expo (Vancouver).
- I don't like being looked at as a criminal because I don't have an address. The police come in here and check through the registry. There is no privacy.
- The way all the cheap rooming housing is getting torn down because of development. The Olympics will eliminate all the places that I can afford. Look what happened in Montreal and Vancouver. Do you think Toronto will be any different? Money going into an Olympic bid that could go into helping homeless people. This will be even worse if Toronto doesn't get the Olympics.
- I don't like the shit food at some of the shelters, like the Sally Anne. The food at Seaton is decent, but much of what you get at the other places is out of date. Why feed it to us if you won't sell it in the supermarket? Would you eat green bread?
- People from 1001 Queen West are sent to Seaton House in the summer and we have to put up with it.
- Living conditions at some shelters, Toronto Humane Society is better than Dixon Hall.
- The ignorance of people in this City, and their attitudes towards people who are homeless. Someone who they call a bum could be a future Prime Minister. There are people with a lot of skills caught in the hostel/welfare system and wasted. There is no encouragement, support or care shown.
- The welfare system is set up to keep people on welfare, not to help you get off welfare.

What I like about Toronto

- The transit system
- Lots of opportunity if you are established, but it's hell to go to work and come back here at night if you're not.
- The night life
- The drop-ins. A warm place to go for free food, phones, talk and counselling.
- People who work in voluntary organizations. They try to help.

If I were planning Toronto's future

- Have more job training and job development opportunities, especially for young people.
- Get the minimum wage raised, especially in Toronto.
- Divert government and private money from big buck things like the Olympics and new subways to building housing that I can afford, helping the unemployed, raising the minimum wage, etc.
- Have more detox places.
- Restructure welfare to give things up front that help to get established: 2 TTC passes, work boots, work clothes and $600.00. In two months, if no job, then put them on $300/month welfare.
- Have more hostels (but not as big as Seaton House!) In decentralized locations (not all downtown).
- Require the social workers to live on the streets for 3 months before working with homeless people.
- Make sure the social housing system is fair and for people who really need it. Follow up on people who don't need to be living in Ontario Housing anymore, but still are.
- Give more money to people who are homeless.
- Have more drop-in centres.
- Start a lottery for building affordable housing.
- Have more government control over private shelters to ensure higher standards.

- Fire the Mayor.
- Start an awareness program across Canada because people are blind to homelessness.
- Have free tickets to the SkyDome, etc.
- Have more groups involved with dealing with homelessness.
- Start a United Way just to help homeless people.
- Have more social workers to work with homeless people.
- Give people who are deinstitutionalized from the mental health system proper (separate) supportive housing or keep them in the hospitals. They should not end up at places like Seaton House.
- Keep drop-ins open all night.
- Have hostels open all day in bad weather and on weekends.
- Have more treatment centres for people on crack, etc.
- Make sure that respect for homeless people is shown by those investigating their situation (i.e. media, planners)
- Employ homeless people to help homeless people. Any seven men in this room would do a better job of getting people out of the welfare system than most social workers.
- Streamline the welfare system so that it is quicker to respond, with less caseloads for the workers so that they can do a better job.

StreetCity

Participants: 15 men participated, all former street people. All are now housed at StreetCity. Most are employed, about half of them on StreetCity. The men ranged in age from 20 to 55; 14 were White, one was Black.

General Observations: The main concerns of this group were the concerns of the working poor; poor pay, benefits, training, job security. They were concerned about police attitudes and negative stereotypes of the poor. They had positive things to say about the City, had some positive attitudes about the political system, and a sense of community. They are expert street people, and were willing to be involved in the Cityplan '91 consultation process. They would like more involvement.

What I like about Toronto

- Street city idea
- The SkyDome and the events
- Operation Springboard
- H.E.L.P. Program
- You can get work in Toronto and job experience.
- There is green space – parks.
- Centre Island
- Parks, churches, old buildings
- SkyDome location
- It is a beautiful City.

StreetCity Focus Group

What I don't like about Toronto

- High rents (for single people)
- Being hassled by cops in parks because I do not wear a three piece suit or because I am "long haired"
- Sunday closing laws
- Post Office strike around Christmas

- High cost of living
- Lack of access to Harbourfront, the Dome, theatres etc.
- Metro social service system and workers who don't care, workers who are arrogant, workers who do not listen
- Workers on my case . . .
- Lack of affordable housing
- Boarded buildings
- When you find a place, you can't afford it.
- Don't like first and last months rent needed .
- Pay damage deposit, they don't do improvements.
- Slum/scum/lords
- Crowded street cars
- High price for Metro Pass
- Cabs who run over; people walking and bicycle riders
- Cabs that will not come into low income areas
- Don't like how cabs refuse to go to Regent Park.
- Jane Finch, Bloor Lansdowne (MTHA)
- Lack of subsidized housing for single people
- MTHA system sucks – when you wait to get in, or once you are in.
- Too many homosexual people who hit on you
- Police force and racial prejudice. Blue Klux Klan
- Police harassment
- Sexual offenders who get short prison terms
- People who have to go to jail because they can't pay fines
- Overcrowded jails
- Parks, roads that are not kept up
- Construction in prime time rush hour
- False alarms – ambulance, police (noise and waste of money)
- Lack of employment security, even in sweat shops
- Sweat shop employers – no security poor wages, no benefits
- Contract labour = slave labour
- Workers that have no control over pay scale
- Low wages
- Lack of benefits
- Not enough affordable retail stores downtown
- Not enough affordable grocery stores downtown
- Don't like Sales Tax – 9%
- Don't like stores that charge sales tax, before they have to
- Smell of sewage
- Smell of tanneries
- Pollution – Don River
- Tax for beer and cigarettes
- That you can't buy beer, spirits anywhere but beer or spirits stores.
- Police who do not let people stand on Queen/ Sherbourne to get jobs
- [Cannot get] bank accounts because no I.D.
- Money marts
- So much money [went] to SkyDome etc from corporations, government - not for housing
- $6.50 for hot dogs, $20.00 for pizza [at the SkyDome]
- Lack of hockey team [in Toronto]
- Harassment over soft drugs, hash, pot, oil etc.
- Hostels [that] are disgusting Seaton House. [It] sucks.
- Salvation Army – money makers, good wills are money makers, try to sell stuff to poor people.
- Medical services [that] are not good if you don't have I.D.
- [Hospital] Emergency that does not give good treatment: slow, inadequate, could die before you are admitted
- Lack of public washrooms and showers
- Lack of support when you are first out of jail
- Lack of enough support with $ to get to jobs and food
- General attitude of people in Toronto – of the rich
- Don't like yuppies – cock their leg on us and pee because we don't drive BMW's.
- General preference for refugees at welfare, government systems. "They come out with two cheques, I come out with an argument".
- $10 million dollars to foreign aid, none to "our aid" "home aid"
- Brian Mulroney
- Condominiums
- Churches [that] lock doors
- Church conversion into condominiums, after years of tax breaks
- Lack of a free downtown bus shelter
- SkyDome location

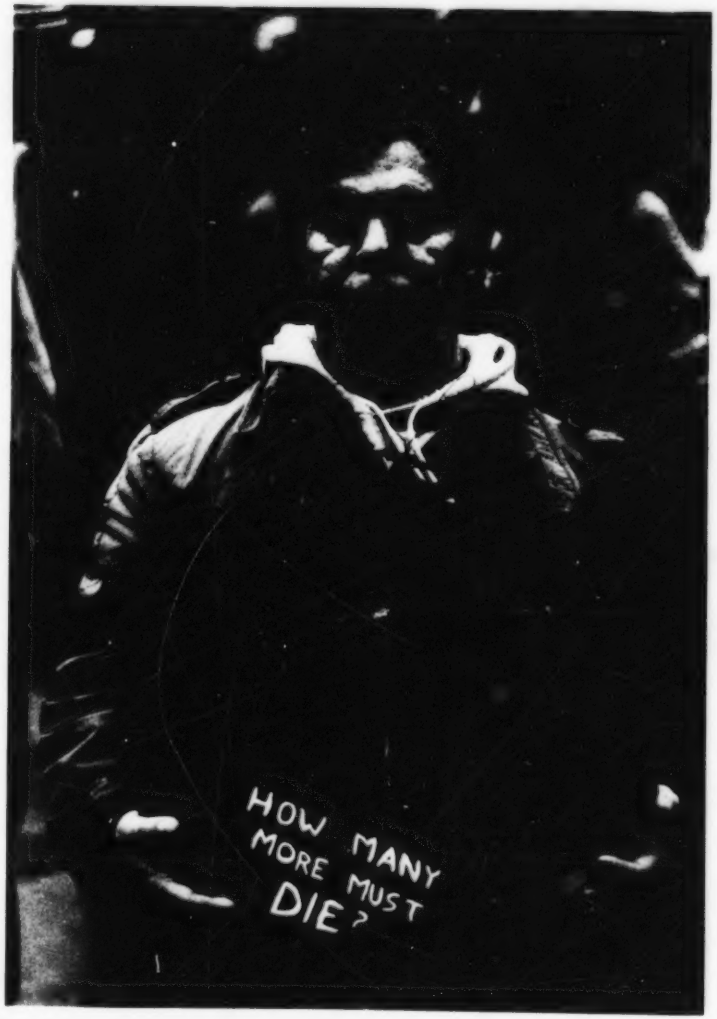
- Handicapped [have to] sleep in bus shelters.
- Treatment of the handicapped
- Landlord can throw you out with a pet
- Discrimination against smokers: in buildings, cabs, apartments, air planes, restaurants, buses etc.
- [That] smokers have no rights, people complain, then cigarette costs rise.
- Free trade sucks, we sold our country and didn't get a cent for it.
- Canadians losing jobs due to free trade
- City recreation centres [that] are not easily accessible to the public
- Income cheques [that are] not big enough ("basic drunk or two day drunk")
- Don't like being told you can't be in a bar because of: jeans, leather jacket, workbooks, no shirt and tie, helmets, black "t" shirts, etc.
- People who say just because I am poor, I don't have to look like it.
- Discrimination based on appearance
- People from B.C., out East etc., who can't camp in parks, get fined.
- [That Toronto is a] "rich man's City," a City of gold
- [Having] to own property or sell coke to survive the high cost of living
- That it is difficult to get a drivers license, [it] costs too much.
- Need I.D. to get I.D. – it costs money, takes too much time.
- [When] I.D. gets ripped off, people commit crimes in your name.
- [When the] rich have the majority
- Laws for the rich [that] are different than those for the poor
- Unequal taxes, rich get the breaks. The higher (your) income, the less you pay.
- Procrastinating politicians

If I were planning Toronto's future

- More water fountains
- [To be able to] work fines off with community service work, not do jail time
- More Manpower offices, where you get the money (casual jobs)
- Beer/spirits to be sold in corner stores
- I like it when street people can take control and have input "StreetCity." "I like StreetCity".
- Like to see more programs like H.E.L.P.
- More drop-ins
- No traffic on Yonge Street
- A walking downtown mall
- No cars downtown
- A designated area for graffiti and political messages
- [To] keep Leslie Street Spit as a bird sanctuary. It should be more of a park, accessible to all.
- Free bus services on Sundays and holidays
- Designated drivers should drink free (non-alcoholic), free cabs home, bar people should help take you home.
- More homes for the homeless
- Emergency service to go out and pick up handicapped people who are sleeping in shelters
- More places like StreetCity
- More bike paths
- More bike lanes on major streets
- More kid centres run by street people
- More recreation centres that are free – like John Innes Recreation Centre
- More places to drink – if you live outside you should be able to drink alcohol there
- People could sleep in the parks, camping areas – campground in High Park.
- More meetings like this, more input from the poor
- [We are] homeless not helpless – we should have more input.
- More skill training for low income people, i.e. other career opportunities, accounting stuff
- World's Fair and Olympics which could create more jobs, more housing
- More City jobs [should be given] to welfare people
- Politicians who don't just sound good, but do the work
- More seniors agencies

"Let community groups fix up old buildings."

"We are all one City. We need to change the way people feel and talk about the division between the haves and the have-nots to make all parts of the City good places to live."



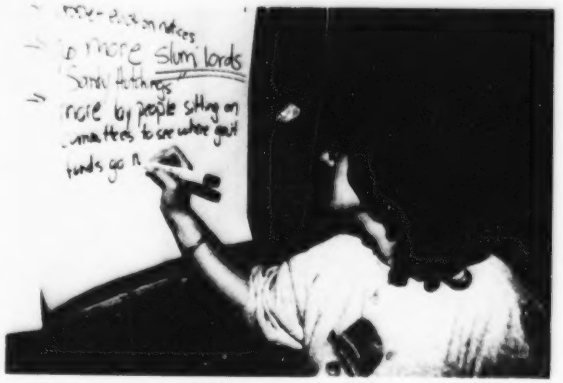
The consultations with homeless people highlight the following points:

1. Homeless people share the same concerns as the population generally about the City of Toronto. However, because of the 'more public' and 'more marginal' nature of their lives, certain issues are likely to loom much larger for them than for members of the general population.
2. The chronic shortage of affordable housing impinges much more on the day to day lives of homeless people. It means they are likely to be homeless and continue to lead unstable lives for longer than if there were sufficient affordable housing.
3. For homeless people, the relatively high cost of food in the downtown areas where most live causes budgetary hardship. Food banks are not an acceptable alternative, since to acquire food there frequently means exposure to moral censure and/or rudeness. Subsidized, affordable restaurants where homeless people can eat in dignity are seen as preferable by some.
4. Community services are part of the daily experience of homeless people. They are fully aware of all of their shortcomings, because they are frequently dependent on them. A common shortcoming is that they operate on a timetable suitable to staff of such services rather than one that matches the needs of those they are mandated to serve. Hospitals are seen as particularly unresponsive to the health needs of homeless people, who frequently must endure long waiting periods in Hospital Emergency Units as their only access point to health care. More accessible health services and better support for people who have been deinstitutionalized are seen as essential.
5. With one main exception, public services are seen mostly in a favourable light. There are some suggestions for increasing availability and accessibility for homeless people, such as extending the hours for libraries and recreation centres. However, the justice system is not perceived to be just. Experience of nuisance offenses being dealt with by the courts

Conclusions

imposing unpayable fines and subsequent jail terms is common. Proposed alternatives include a more effective community service order program.

6. Homeless people are the true 'low-income' people in this City. Some of them are 'no-income'. They attempt to make ends meet in a variety of ways, most of which are unsatisfactory to them as human beings and are unsatisfactory to the rest of us in the City. Two suggested improvements are: a stronger public/non-profit role that matches and develops skills and abilities with employment opportunities and facilitates people out of welfare dependency; and a liveable minimum wage for Toronto.
7. Lack of proper identification and a permanent address means that homeless people are frequently subjected to a high degree of exploitation when they go to cash their cheques at the commercial cheque cashing services. They are likely to be twice exploited: by being paid wages at a rock-bottom level for onerous work and by being charged a certain percentage for cashing the pay cheque.
8. Homeless people experience a lack of power that is equivalent to their lack of income and their lack of housing. These factors are all interrelated. They feel particularly strongly about the blocks to opportunity that appear to be built into the system. It is seen as an unresponsive system at best and one that conspires to 'keep them down' at worst. "Procrastinating politicians and bureau-cratic bullshit" describes the system for many. They are likely to be the last people considered, yet the most affected when city planning decisions are made.
9. Getting around the City is more difficult for those with little money and no home. Consequently, efficient, friendly, warm public transport is of considerable importance.
10. Since they live such a public life, the environment and parks and open space play an important role in the life of homeless people. A safe, clean environment, welcoming parks and open spaces are, therefore, vital.
11. Safety is particularly important to those who are most vulnerable. Because of their lack of secure housing and income, most homeless people are extremely vulnerable. It is ironic that the perceived safety and security of the non-homeless becomes a threat to the safety and security of the homeless through police harassment on the streets, in shopping malls, etc.



"No more Slum Lords!"-
The Meeting Place Focus Group

The voice of those who are homeless should be taken seriously into account in the development of Cityplan '91 and the Healthy City program. The concentration of homeless people is primarily within the Central Area. Their very public lives means that they are likely to have the kinds of insights that other citizens who spend much less time on the streets of this city are likely to have. By reaching out and involving the "have-leasts", there is potential for meaningful change for all.

This process has been a beginning in listening to those voices. However, it is only a beginning and should be used as a point of departure for much greater involvement of Toronto's homeless population in the city planning process. Two comments are particularly appropriate in setting the directions in which to proceed:

"We are 'Homeless' not helpless. We should have more input."

"Look at the 'Dislikes' list seriously, because it is much longer than the list of things we like about Toronto."

The Homeless Persons Outreach Group further proposes to design and carry out a strategy for continuing participation of persons who are homeless in the planning process of Cityplan '91, and to prepare a draft community development strategy relating to issues identified in the report for consideration by the Healthy City Work Group. The Alternative Housing Sub-committee of the City of Toronto Neighbourhoods Committee will be involved in the development of this strategy.

A second series of focus groups is to be undertaken by the fall of 1990 on the Social Equity issues identified in this report. Particular emphasis will be placed on furthering our understanding of factors leading to homelessness and on the ground work for the community development process.

Next Steps

Acknowledgements:

This publication was written collaboratively by Kevin Barrett, Rick Ciccarelli, John Flanders, Elizabeth Greaves, Sue Kaiser, Sheila Miller and Jim Ward
Editing: Rick Ciccarelli
Photography: John Flanders
Graphics, design and layout: Planning and Development Department
Resource People: Ruth Greenspan, Joy Kogawa, Gail Lyons, Ruth Mott, Bill Powell, Jacques Tremblay
Particular thanks is given to the 135 focus group participants and to those involved in staging the sessions at All Saints Open Door, Anduhyaun, 416 Dundas Drop In Centre, Metro Family Residence, Na-Me-Res, Robertson House, St. Christopher-The Meeting Place, Seaton House and StreetCity